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A

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

THOMAS JEFFERSON

BY

HENRY D. GILPIN.

FROM THE

BIOGRAPHY OF THE SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE.

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THOMAS JEFFERSON.

THE great tragic poet of antiquity has observed, and historians and philosophers in every age, have repeated the observation, that no one should be pronounced happy, till death has closed the period of human uncertainty. Yet, if to descend into the vale of life, beloved and honoured; to see the labours of our earlier years, crowned with more than hoped for success; to enjoy while living, that fame, which is usually bestowed only beyond the tomb; if these could confer aught of happiness, on this side the grave, then may the subject of our memoir be esteemed truly happy.

He, indeed, survived those who were the partners of his toils, and the companions of his earlier years; but in so doing, he did not experience the usual fate of mortality, in surviving the sympathy, the kindness, and the love of his fellow creatures. A new race of companions rose around him, who added to those feelings the deeper ones of admiration, respect, and gratitude; and he long lived in the bosom of his country, which was the bosom of his friends, cherished with an affection, bestowed at once by the ardour of youth, and the reflection of age.

One cannot resist applying to him, that sentiment in which the greatest of historians has indulged, when speaking of a man whom Mr. Jefferson strongly resembled, in the mild and virtuous dignity of his domestic character, his fondness for the pursuits of science, chastened, but not extinguished by the occupations of an active life, the serenity of his temper and manners, and a modesty and simplicity, which, while they shed an uncommon lustre over his public career, doubly adorned the less conspicuous scenes of retirement. "Agricola had possessed to the full," says Tacitus, "those enjoyments which alone can make us truly happy, those which spring from virtue—he had been adorned with all the dignity, which consular rank or triumphal honours could bestow—what more could fortune add to his happiness or his fame?"

Need the author of this article say, that it is with feelings of unaffected diffidence, he takes his pen to record a brief, and probably transient account, of the chief incidents in the life of this distinguished man? need he say, that he can indulge no hope of portraying, either vividly or justly, those brilliant characteristics with which it abounds? and need he add, that if his sketch shall possess any interest, it is to be attributed more to the illustrious name which adorns it, than to its own excellence? He is indeed but too well aware that the historian of Mr. Jefferson has not an easy task to perform. His was a life of no common character. It was one abounding in great events and extraordinary circumstances, upon which the opinions of his countrymen have been so much divided, that prejudices arising from their divisions, have thrown their shade upon almost every transaction of his life. Let it be remembered, however, that to these conflicting sentiments, a biographer is not called on to become a party; nor would it be proper in him to obtrude the pecu-

liar opinions he may entertain. It is his duty alone to state their existence, with the powerful influence that attended them, and to ask from his country, that, all prejudices laid aside, the illustrious object of his labours may come before them, in that cloudless mirror, wherein posterity will examine the fathers of our country.

THOMAS JEFFERSON was descended from a family, which had been long settled in his native province of Virginia. His ancestors had emigrated thither at an early period; and although bringing with them, so far as is known, no fortune beyond that zeal and enterprise which are more than useful to adventurers in a new and unknown country, and no rank beyond a name, which was free from dishonour; they had a standing in the community highly respectable, and lived in circumstances of considerable affluence. His father, Peter Jefferson, was a gentleman well known in the province. He was appointed in the year 1747, one of the commissioners for determining the division line, between Virginia and North Carolina, an office which would seem to indicate at once considerable scientific knowledge, and that integrity, firmness, and discernment, which are so peculiarly necessary in settling the boundaries between small but independent territories.

Thomas Jefferson was born on the second day of April, (O. S.) 1743, at Shadwell, in Albemarle county, Virginia, and on the death of his father, succeeded [to an ample and unembarrassed fortune. But little is known of the incidents of his early life, and the biographer is entirely destitute of those anecdotes of youth which are so often remembered and recorded, pointing out, as they seem to do, the latent sparks of genius, and foretelling the career of future usefulness and

honour. We first hear of him as a student in the college of William and Mary, at Williamsburg, and then, ignorant of his success on the youthful arena of literary fame, find him a student of law, under a master whose talents and virtue, may have offered a model for his succeeding life, the celebrated George Wythe, afterwards chancellor of the state of Virginia. With this gentleman he was united, not merely by the ties of professional connexion, but by a congeniality of feeling, and similarity of views, alike honourable to them both; the friendship formed in youth was cemented and strengthened by age, and when the venerable preceptor closed his life, in 1806, he bequeathed his library and philosophical apparatus to a pupil and friend, who had already proved himself worthy of his instruction and regard.

Mr. Jefferson was called to the bar in the year 1766; and pursued the practice of his profession, with zeal and success. In the short period during which he continued to devote himself to it, without the interruption of political objects, he acquired very considerable reputation, and there still exists a monument of his early labour and useful talents, in a volume of Reports of adjudged cases in the supreme courts of Virginia, compiled and digested, amid the engagements of active professional occupation.

But he came into life at a period, when those who possessed the confidence of their fellow citizens, and the energy and talents requisite for public life, were not long permitted to remain in a private station, and pursue their ordinary affairs; he was soon called to embark in a career of more extensive usefulness, and to aim at higher objects—*ingenium illustre altioribus studiis juvenis admodum dedit, quo firrior adversus fortuita rempublicam capesseret.* We find him accordingly,

as early as the year 1769, a distinguished member of the legislature of Virginia, associated with men, whose names are inscribed among the first and most determined champions of our rights. Ever since the year 1763, a spirit of opposition to the British government, had been gradually arising in the province, and this spirit was more and more increased, by the arbitrary measures of the mother country, which seemed to be the offsprings of rashness and folly, singularly extraordinary. The attachment to England was, indeed, considerable in all the colonies, and in Virginia it was more than usually strong ; many of the principal families of the province were connected with it by the closest ties of consanguinity ; the young men of promise, were sent thither to complete their education in its colleges ; and by many, and those not the least patriotic, it was fondly looked to as their *home*. To sever this connexion, one would suppose to be a work of no ordinary facility ; yet such was the rash course pursued by the British ministry, that a very brief space was sufficient, to dissolve in every breast that glowed with national feeling, the ties which had been formed by blood, by time, and by policy ; a very short experience was enough to convince every mind, conversant with the political history of the world, and able to weigh, amid the tumult of the times, the probable chances of successful resistance, with the miseries of submission or defeat, that there was no hazard too great to be encountered, for the establishment of institutions, which would secure the country from a repetition of insults that could only end in the most abject slavery. It will not be doubted, that Mr. Jefferson was among the first to perceive the only course that could be adopted ; his own expressive language portrays at once the sufferings of the country, and the necessity of resistance.

“The colonies” he says, in alluding to this period, “were taxed internally and externally; their essential interests sacrificed to individuals in Great Britain; their legislatures suspended; charters annulled; trials by juries taken away; their persons subjected to transportation across the Atlantic, and to trial by foreign judicatories; their supplications for redress thought beneath answer; themselves published as cowards in the councils of their mother country and courts of Europe; armed troops sent amongst them to enforce submission to these violences; and actual hostilities commenced against them. No alternative was presented, but resistance or unconditional submission. Between these there could be no hesitation. They closed in the appeal to arms.”

On the first of January, 1772, Mr. Jefferson married the daughter of Mr. Wayles, an eminent lawyer of Virginia; an alliance by which he at once gained an accession of strength and credit; and secured in the intervals of public business, (which indeed were few) the domestic happiness he was so well fitted to partake and to enjoy. Its duration, however, was but short; in little more than ten years, death deprived him of his wife, and left him the sole guardian of two infant daughters, to whose education he devoted himself with a constancy and zeal, which might in some degree compensate for the want of a mother's care and instruction.

On the twelfth of March, 1773, Mr. Jefferson was appointed a member of the first committee of correspondence, established by the colonial legislatures; an act already alluded to as one of the most important of the revolution, having paved the way for that union of action and sentiment, whence arose the first effective resistance, and on which depended the successful conduct and final triumph of the cause.

The year 1774, found Mr. Jefferson still an active member of the legislature of Virginia. The passage of the Boston port act, and the bills which immediately followed it, had filled up the measure of insult and oppression. The private property of all was to be sacrificed for the public conduct of a few; the faith of charters was unhesitatingly violated; and personal liberty and life itself were destroyed, without resort to the common forms of justice, and without redress. At this crisis, Mr. Jefferson wrote and published his "Summary view of the rights of British America;" having devoted to its composition all the leisure he could obtain from the labours of his public situation; although these had become by this time, from his active and energetic character, extremely arduous.

This pamphlet he addressed to the king, as the chief officer of the people, appointed by the laws and circumscribed with definitive power, to assist in working the great machine of government, erected for their use, and consequently subject to their superintendence. He reminded him, that our ancestors had been British freemen, that they had acquired their settlements here, at their own expense and blood; that it was for themselves they fought, for themselves they conquered, and for themselves alone, they had a right to hold. That they had indeed thought proper to adopt the same system of laws, under which they had hitherto lived, and to unite themselves under a common sovereign; but that no act of theirs had ever given a title to that authority, which the British parliament arrogated. That the crown had unjustly commenced its encroachments, by distributing the settlements among its favourites, and the followers of its fortunes; that it then proceeded to abridge the free trade, which the colonies possessed as of natural right, with all parts of

the world ; and that afterwards offices were established of little use, but to accommodate the ministers and favourites of the crown. That during the reign of the sovereign whom he immediately addressed, the violation of rights had increased in rapid and bold succession ; being no longer single acts of tyranny, that might be ascribed to the accidental opinion of a day ; but a series of oppressions, pursued so unalterably through every change of ministers, as to prove too plainly a deliberate and systematical plan, of reducing the colonies to slavery. He next proceeds, in a style of the boldest invective, to point out the several acts by which this plan had been enforced, and enters against them a solemn and determined protest. He then considers the conduct of the king, as holding an executive authority in the colonies, and points out, without hesitation, his deviation from the line of duty ; he asserts, that by the unjust exercise of his negative power, he had rejected laws of the most salutary tendency ; that he had defeated repeated attempts to stop the slave trade and abolish slavery ; thus preferring the immediate advantages of a few African corsairs, to the lasting interests of America, and to the rights of human nature, deeply wounded by this infamous practice. That inattentive to the necessities of his people, he had neglected for years, the laws which were sent for his inspection. And that assuming a power, for advising the exercise of which, the English judges in a former reign had suffered death as traitors to their country, he had dissolved the representative assemblies, and refused to call others. That to enforce these, and other arbitrary measures, he had from time to time sent over large bodies of armed men, not made up of the people here, nor raised by the authority of their laws. That to render these proceedings still more criminal, instead of sub-

jecting the military to the civil powers, he had expressly made the latter subordinate to the former. That these grievances were thus laid before their sovereign, with that freedom of language and sentiment which became a free people, whom flattery would ill beseem, when asserting the rights of human nature ; and who knew nor feared to say, that kings are the servants, not the proprietors of the people.

In these sentiments, bold as they were, his political associates united with him ; they considered that which was nominally directed against the colonies of New England alone, equally an attack on the liberties and rights of every other province. They resolved that the first of June, the day on which the operation of the Boston port bill was to commence, should be set apart by the members, as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer ; “devoutly to implore the divine interposition, for averting the heavy calamities which threatened destruction to their civil rights, and the evils of a civil war ; and to give them one heart and one mind, to oppose, by all just and proper means, every injury to American rights.”

Such proceedings greatly exasperated lord Dunmore, the royal governor of the province. He threatened a prosecution for high treason against Mr. Jefferson, who boldly avowed himself the author of the obnoxious pamphlet, and dissolved the house of burgesses, immediately after the publication of their resolution. Notwithstanding these arbitrary measures, the members met in their private capacities, and mutually signed a spirited declaration, wherein they set forth the unjust conduct of the governor, which had left them this, the only method, to point out to their countrymen, the measures they deemed the best fitted to secure their rights and liberties from destruction, by the heavy hand of power. They told

them, that they could no longer resist the conviction, that a determined system had been formed to reduce the inhabitants of British America to slavery, by subjecting them to taxation without their consent, by closing the port of Boston, and raising a revenue on tea. They therefore strongly recommended a close alliance with their sister colonies, the formation of committees of correspondence, and the annual meeting of a general congress; earnestly hoping that a persistence in those unconstitutional principles, would not compel them to adopt measures of a character more decisive.

The year 1775, opened in England, with attempts, at once by the friends and the enemies of the colonies, to effect a reconciliation. Perhaps the period had passed away, when success was to be expected, from the efforts of the former; but even an experiment on their plan was not allowed to be made. The house of lords received, with chilling apathy, the proposition submitted by the energy, the patriotism and the experience of the dying Chatham; and the house of commons listened, without conviction, to the well digested plans of Mr. Burke, brought forward as they were, with an eloquence unequalled perhaps in the records of any age or country, and supported by that intuitive quickness of perception, that astonishing correctness of foresight, which so often marked his political predictions.

The ministry were determined that the reconciliation, if indeed they ever sincerely wished for one, should proceed from themselves, and be made on their own terms; they offered that so long as the colonial legislatures should contribute a fair proportion for the common defence, and for the support of the civil government, no tax should be laid by parliament; but that the amount raised by these means, should be disposable by that body. This proposition, bear-

ing indeed some semblance of conciliation, but in fact yielding no single point of that arbitrary system which Great Britain had chosen to adopt, was carried by a large majority, and sent to the governors of the several colonies, with directions to lay it before the respective legislatures. It was at least hoped, that if the scheme did not finally succeed, it might produce disunion or discontent.

¶ On the first of June, 1775, lord Dunmore presented to the legislature of Virginia, the resolution of the British parliament. It was referred immediately to a committee, and Mr. Jefferson was selected to frame the reply. This task he performed with so much strength of argument, enlightened patriotism, and sound political discretion, that the document has been ever considered, as a state paper of the highest order. It is found in most of the histories of that period, and for a work like this, it may be sufficient merely to give the sentence, with which he concludes a series of propositions and an array of facts, alike unanswered and unanswerable.

“These, my lord, are our sentiments on this important subject, which we offer only as an individual part of the whole empire. Final determination we leave to the general congress now sitting, before whom we shall lay the papers your lordship has communicated to us. For ourselves, we have exhausted every mode of application, which our invention could suggest as proper and promising. We have decently remonstrated with parliament, they have added new injuries to the old; we have wearied our king with supplications, he has not deigned to answer us; we have appealed to the native honour and justice of the British nation, their efforts in our favour have hitherto been ineffectual. What then remains to be done? That we commit our injuries to the even handed justice of that Being who doth no wrong,

earnestly beseeching Him to illuminate the councils, and prosper the endeavours of those to whom America hath confided her hopes ; that through their wise directions, we may again see reunited the blessings of liberty, prosperity, and harmony with Great Britain."

Mr. Jefferson had been elected, on the twenty-seventh of March, 1775, one of the members to represent Virginia, in the general congress of the confederated colonies, already assembled at Philadelphia. When about to leave the colony, a circumstance is said to have occurred to him, and to Mr. Harrison and Mr. Lee, his fellow delegates, that conveyed a noble mark of the unbounded confidence, which their constituents reposed in their integrity and virtue. A portion of the inhabitants, who, far removed from the scenes of actual tyranny, which were acted in New England, and pursuing uninterruptedly their ordinary pursuits, could form no idea of the slavery impending over them, waited on their three representatives, just before their departure, and addressed them in the following terms :

"You assert that there is a fixed design to invade our rights and privileges ; we own that we do not see this clearly, but since you assure us that it is so, we believe the fact. We are about to take a very dangerous step ; but we confide in you, and are ready to support you in every measure you shall think proper to adopt."

On Wednesday, the twenty-first of June, 1775, Mr. Jefferson appeared and took his seat in the continental congress ; and it was not long before he became conspicuous among those, most distinguished by their abilities and ardour. In a few days after his arrival, he was made a member of a committee appointed to draw up a declaration, setting forth the causes and necessity of resorting to arms ; a task, which,

like all the other addresses of this congress, was executed with singular ability, and in which it is more than probable, the Virginia delegate took no inconsiderable part.

In July, the resolution of the house of commons for conciliating the colonies, which had been presented to the different legislatures, and to which, as we have already related, Mr. Jefferson had framed the reply of Virginia, was laid before congress. He was immediately named a member of the committee to whom it was referred, and in a few days a report was presented embracing the same general views as his own, and repeating that the neglect with which all our overtures were received, had destroyed every hope, but that of reliance on our own exertions.

On the eleventh of August, Mr. Jefferson was again elected a delegate from Virginia, to the third congress. During the winter, his name appears very frequently on the journals of that assembly, and we find him constantly taking an active part in the principal matters which engaged its attention. He was a member of various committees, but from the information to be obtained on the records of congress, and it is but scanty, his attention seems rather to have been devoted to objects of general policy, the arrangement of general plans and systems of action, the investigation of important documents, and objects of a similar nature, than to the details of active business for which other members could probably be found, equally well qualified.

With the commencement of the year 1776, the affairs of the colonies, and certainly the views of their political leaders, began to assume a new aspect, one of more energy, and with motives and objects more decided and apparent. Eighteen months had passed away, since the colonists had learned by

the entrenchments at Boston, that a resort to arms was an event, not beyond the contemplation of the British ministry ; nearly a year had elapsed, since the fields of Concord and Lexington had been stained with hostile blood ; during this interval, armies had been raised, vessels of war had been equipped, fortifications had been erected, gallant exploits had been performed, and eventful battles had been lost and won ; yet still were the provinces bound to their British brethren, by the ties of a similar allegiance ; still did they look upon themselves as members of the same empire, subjects of the same sovereign, and partners in the same constitution and laws. They acknowledged, that the measures they had adopted were not the result of choice, but the exercise of a right if not a duty, resulting from this very situation ; they confessed that they were engaged in a controversy peculiarly abhorrent to their affections, of which the only object was to restore the harmony formerly existing between the two countries, and to establish it on so firm a basis, as to perpetuate its blessings, uninterrupted by any future dissensions, to succeeding generations in both nations.

There is indeed among all men a natural reluctance to throw off those habits, we may say principles, to which they have become attached, by education and long usage—there is an uncertainty always hanging over the future, that makes us dread to explore it, in search of an expected but uncertain good—and we seem rather willing to wait until fortune or time shall afford a remedy, than to seek it by boldly grasping at that, which although bright and beautiful in appearance, can be reached only with toil and danger, and may prove at last a phantom. A revolution, however just in its principles, however plausible in its conduct, however pure in its ends, cannot be but uncertain in its results ; and though even the

thinking and the good will not hesitate, when no other means are left to preserve those rights, without which happiness is only a name, they will resort to it as the last resource, after every other expedient has been tried, after long suffering, with hesitation, almost with regret.

Every expedient, however, short of unconditional separation, had now been tried by congress—but in vain. It appeared worse than useless, longer to pursue measures of open hostility, and yet to hold out the promises of reconciliation. The time had arrived when a more decided stand must be taken—the circumstances of the nation demanded it, the success of the struggle depended on it. The best and wisest men had become convinced, that no accommodation could take place, and that a course which was not marked by decision would create dissatisfaction among the resolute, while it would render more uncertain the feeble and the wavering.

During the spring of 1776, therefore, the question of independence became one of very general interest and reflection among all classes of the nation. It was taken into consideration by some of the colonial legislatures, and in Virginia a resolution was adopted in favour of its immediate declaration.

Under these circumstances, the subject was brought directly before congress, on Friday, the seventh of June, 1776. It was discussed very fully on the following Saturday and Monday, and we have already mentioned, that after the debate they came to the determination to postpone the further consideration of it until the first of July following. In the mean while, however, that no time might be lost, in case the congress should agree thereto, a committee was appointed to prepare a declaration, “That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states ; that they are absolved from

all allegiance to the British crown ; and that all political connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

This committee consisted of Mr. Jefferson, Mr. J. Adams, Mr. Franklin, Mr. Sherman, and Mr. R. R. Livingston; and to Mr. Jefferson, the chairman of the committee, was ultimately assigned the important duty of preparing the draught of the document, for the formation of which they had been appointed.

The task thus devolved on Mr. Jefferson, was of no ordinary magnitude ; and required the exercise of no common judgment and foresight. The act was one, which in its results, would operate far beyond the effects of the moment ; and which was to indicate, in no small degree, the future tone of feeling, and the great course of policy that were to direct the movements of a new and extensive empire. Yet it was on all hands surrounded with difficulty and danger—clouds and darkness rested on the future—and without experience, without resources, and without friends, they were entering on a wide field, with nought but providence for their guide. Even the feelings of the nation, the very feelings which prompted the act, were to be examined with caution and relied on with distrust, for how much soever they might be the primary cause, and however powerfully they might exist at the moment, their effect would have ceased, and their operation would be unknown, at that period when the principles they had called forth would be in full exercise. Yet all this caution and distrust was to be exerted, amid the excitement of passion, the fluctuation of public opinion, and the headstrong impetuosity, which made the people, whose act it purported to be, blind to every thing but their own wrongs, and the deepest emotions of exasperation and revenge.

It was an act which at once involved the dearest and most vital interests of the whole people. It overturned systems of government long established, and sacrificed a trade, already amounting annually to more than twenty millions of dollars. By it the whole nation was to stand or fall ; it was a step that could not be retraced ; a pledge involving the lives, the fortunes, and the honour of thousands, which must be redeemed at the deepest cost of blood and treasure ; it was a measure, supposed to be viewed unfavourably by a very large proportion of those whose interests and happiness were concerned in it, and, as such, a want of prudence in its conduct, as well as of success in its end, would be attended with even more than ridicule or disgrace.

Nor was it in America alone, that its effects would be felt ; it was a document to guide other nations in their course of policy, to turn their attention to our situation, in which there was nothing to dazzle and little to interest, and to bring them if possible into our alliance. As such, it would become a matter of deep reflection by prudent, if not unfeeling statesmen, far removed from the scene of action ; looking upon it without passion ; and forming from it their opinions of our character, and the reliance that might be placed on us. In a word, while it purported to be, as it was, the offspring of injuries unatoned for, and rights wantonly violated, it was to bear the marks of calm heroic devotion, and to show us ardent in the pursuit and preservation of our rights, but cool and deliberate in our plans, slow in undertaking that which was attended with uncertainty and danger, but, once convinced of its necessity, undeviating in our course, and fixed on the object of pursuit.

It presented indeed to the consideration of the world, an object of greater magnitude than had for ages engaged its

attention. It was no question of insulted flags, or violated boundaries ; no matter to be traced through the labyrinths of diplomacy, or to be settled by the rules of court etiquette. It was not the manifesto of an ambitious sovereign, who proclaims to the world in loud and haughty language, a long catalogue of imaginary grievances, to form a pretext for the violation of plighted faith, and the last resort to arms. But it was the manly declaration of indignant suffering ; the result of injury protracted beyond endurance ; the just appeal to the only remedy that was left, after every milder method had been tried in vain.

To frame such a document, was the effort of no common mind. That of Mr. Jefferson proved fully equal to the task. His labours received the immediate approbation and sanction of the committee ; and their opinion has been confirmed by the testimony of succeeding years, and of every nation where it has been known.

On the twenty-eighth of June the Declaration of Independence was presented to congress, and read ; on the first, second, and third of July it was taken into very full consideration ; and on the fourth, it was agreed to after several alterations and considerable omissions had been made in the draught, as it was first framed by the committee.

The declaration in its original form, compared with that which was subsequently given to the world, is a document of much interest, and seems indeed so peculiarly proper to be inserted in a memoir of its illustrious author, that we subjoin it ; marking in italics the words which were erased by congress, and introducing between brackets, the additions and substitutions that were made before it received the final sanction of that assembly. It is as follows.

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind, requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

“We hold these truths to be self evident—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with [certain] *inherent and unalienable* rights; that amongst these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established, should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, *begun at a distant period and pursuing* invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards to their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to [alter] *expunge* their former systems of government.

“The history of the present king of Great Britain is a history of [repeated] *unremitting* injuries and usurpations, among which appears no solitary fact to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest ; but all have [all having,] in direct object, the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world, for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unsullied by falsehood.

“He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

“He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained ; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

“He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.

“He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

“He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly *and continually*, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

“He has refused, for a long time after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected ; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise ; the state remaining in the mean time exposed to all the danger of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

“He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these states ; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners, refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

“He has *suffered* [obstructed] the administration of justice *totally to cease in some of these states*, [by] refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

“He has made *our* judges dependent on his will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

“He has erected a multitude of new offices, *by a self assumed power*, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

“He has kept among us in times of peace, standing armies *and ships of war*, without the consent of our legislatures.

“He has affected to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power.

“He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws ; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation :

“For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us :

“For protecting them, by mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states :

“For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world :

“For imposing taxes on us without our consent :

“For depriving us, [in many cases,] of the benefits of trial by jury :

“For transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences :

“For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these *states* [colonies:]

“For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments :

“For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us, in all cases whatever :

“He has abdicated government here, *withdrawing his governors, and* [by] declaring us out of his [allegiance and] protection, [and waging war against us:]

“He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people :

“He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy, [scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and] totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

“*He has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions of existence.*

“*He has incited treasonable insurrections of our fellow citizens, with the allurements of forfeiture and confiscation of our property.*

“*He has constrained others, taken captives on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners*

of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

“[He has constrained our fellow citizens taken captive on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.]

“[He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.]

“He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the approbrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of a christian king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or restrain this execrable commerce; and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished dye, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.

“In every stage of these oppressions, we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince

whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a [free] people *who mean to be free. Future ages will scarce believe that the hardiness of one man adventured, within the short compass of twelve years only, to build a foundation so broad and undisguised, for tyranny over a people fostered and fixed in principles of freedom.*

“Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time, of attempts by their legislature *to extend a jurisdiction over these our states*, [to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us.] We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here, *no one of which could warrant so strange a pretension: that these were effected at the expense of our own blood and treasure, unassisted by the wealth or the strength of Great Britain: that in constituting indeed our several forms of government, we had adopted one common king, thereby laying a foundation for perpetual league and amity with them: but that submission to their parliament was no part of our constitution, nor ever in idea, if history may be credited; and we [have] appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, as well as to [and we have conjured them by] the ties of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpations, which were likely to [would inevitably] interrupt our connexions and correspondence. They too, have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity; and when occasions have been given them by the regular course of their laws, of removing from their councils, the disturbers of our harmony, they have by their free election re-established them in power. At this very time too, they are permitting their chief magistrate to send over not only soldiers of our common blood, but Scotch and foreign mercenaries to*

invade and destroy us. These facts have given the last stab to agonizing affection; and manly spirit bids us to renounce forever these unfeeling brethren. We must endeavour to forget our former love for them, and to hold them as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends. We might have been a free and a great people together; but a communication of grandeur and of freedom it seems, is below their dignity. Be it so, since they will have it. The road to happiness and to glory is open to us too: we will climb it apart from them, and acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our eternal separation. [We must therefore acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends.]

“We, therefore, the representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, [appealing to the supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions] do in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these *states* [colonies,] *reject and renounce all allegiance and subjection to the kings of Great Britain, and all others, who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; we utterly dissolve all political connexion which may heretofore have subsisted between us and the parliament of Great Britain; and finally we do assert* [solemnly publish and declare] that these United Colonies are, [and of right ought to be,] free and independent states; [that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved,] and that as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, [with

a firm reliance on DIVINE PROVIDENCE,] we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour."

It has been mentioned in the life of Richard Henry Lee, that, as the original mover of the resolution for independence, the usage of deliberative assemblies would have assigned to him, the duty of preparing the declaration, had he not been absent. This circumstance, united with a feeling of true regard, and a long co-operation in bringing about the great result, induced Mr. Jefferson to send Mr. Lee a copy of the original draught as well as of the amendments made by congress; these he accompanied with a letter, dated the eighth of July, 1776, in which he says:

"Dear Sir—For news, I refer you to your brother, who writes on that head. I enclose you a copy of the Declaration of Independence, as agreed to by the house, and also as originally framed: you will judge whether it is the better or worse for the critics. I shall return to Virginia after the eleventh of August. I wish my successor may be certain to come before that time: in that case, I shall hope to see you, and not Wythe, in convention, that the business of government, which is of everlasting concern, may receive your aid. Adieu, and believe me to be, &c."

During the summer of this year, 1776, Mr. Jefferson took an active part in the deliberations and business of congress; his name appears on the journals of the house very often, and he was a member of several highly important committees. Being obliged however to return to Virginia, he was during his absence appointed, in conjunction with Dr. Franklin and Mr. Deane, a commissioner to the court of France, for

the purpose of arranging with that nation a measure, now become of vital necessity, the formation of treaties of alliance and commerce. But owing at once to his ill health, the situation of his family, and the embarrassed position of public affairs, especially in his own state, he was convinced that to remain in America, would be more useful than to go abroad ; and in a letter to congress of the eleventh of October, he declined the appointment.

From this period, during the remainder of the revolutionary war, Mr. Jefferson chiefly devoted himself to the service of his own state. In June he had been a third time elected a delegate to congress, but in October following, he resigned his situation in that body, and was succeeded by Benjamin Harrison. The object which now chiefly engaged him was the improvement of the civil government of Virginia. In May preceding, immediately on the disorganization of the colonial system, the convention assembled at Williamsburg, had turned their attention to the formation of a new plan of government ; and with a haste, which bespeaks rather the ardour of a zealous and oppressed people for the assertion of their own rights, than the calmness and deliberation that should attend an act, in which their future welfare was so deeply involved, they adopted their constitution in the following month. Mr. Jefferson was at this time absent in Philadelphia, a delegate to congress ; foreseeing the inevitable result of the contest between the colonies and the mother country, he had for a long while devoted much reflection and research to maturing a plan for a new government, and had already formed one, on the purest principles of republicanism. This draught he transmitted to the convention ; but unfortunately, the one that they had hastily framed, had received a final vote on the day it reached Williams-

burg. The debate had already been ardent and protracted, the members were wearied and exhausted, and after making a few alterations, and adopting entire the masterly preamble which Mr. Jefferson had prefixed, it was thought expedient for the present to adhere to the original plan, imperfect as on all hands it was acknowledged to be.

The extremes of right and wrong are said very closely to approach each other. An incident in the political history of Virginia, does not invalidate the maxim. In June, this constitution had been adopted, breathing in every article the most vehement spirit of equal rights, and established on the downfall of arbitrary rule. In the following December, a serious proposition was made to establish a dictator, "invested with every power, legislative, executive, and judiciary, civil and military, of life and of death, over our persons and over our properties." To the wise and good of every party, such a scheme could not but appear as absurd as it was dangerous. In Mr. Jefferson it found a ready and successful opponent at the time, and he has devoted to its consideration and censure, a few pages of his later works.

A wiser plan was adopted to relieve the state from its difficulties, by a careful revision of its laws. A commission was appointed for this purpose, consisting of Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Pendleton, George Wythe, George Mason, and Thomas Ludwell Lee, who employed themselves zealously in their task, from the commencement of the year 1777, to the middle of 1779. In that period it is said, their industry and zeal prepared no less than one hundred and twenty-six bills, from which are derived all the most liberal features of the existing laws of the commonwealth. The method they pursued was marked with prudence and intelligence. It is thus described by Mr. Jefferson himself.

“The plan of the revisal was this. The common law of England, by which is meant that part of the English law which was anterior to the date of the oldest statutes extant, is made the basis of the work. It was thought dangerous to attempt to reduce it to a text : it was therefore left to be collected from the usual monuments of it. Necessary alterations in that, and so much of the whole body of the British statutes, and of acts of assembly, as were thought proper to be retained, were digested into a hundred and twenty-six new acts, in which simplicity of style was aimed at, as far as was safe.”

In the account which Mr. Jefferson has given of this revisal of the laws of Virginia, he has, with the modesty of true greatness, suppressed every word which could indicate his own participation in an employment so highly honourable. But it is the duty of those who record the actions of the great, to point out that which their own modesty would conceal. Of the five commissioners, two, George Mason and Thomas Ludwell Lee, took no part in the execution of the task, except in a consultative meeting preliminary to the assignment of the respective portions of the duty to the three others. As regards Mr. Jefferson it should be mentioned, that in addition to the prominent and laborious share which he undertook in the general revision, Virginia owes to his enlightened mind alone, the most important and beneficial changes in her code. The laws forbidding the future importation of slaves ; converting estates tail into fees simple ; annulling the rights of primogeniture ; establishing schools for general education ; sanctioning the right of expatriation ; and confirming the rights of freedom in religious opinion, were all introduced by him, and were adopted at the time they were first proposed, or at a subsequent period ; in addi-

tion to these, he brought forward a law proportioning crimes and punishments, which was afterwards passed under a different modification.

To enter into the details of these laws, would lead us from the object as it would far exceed the limits of this slight sketch ; yet to the lawyer and politician, they may be recommended as containing many invaluable lessons in legal and political science, and to those who have been accustomed to view this great statesman rather as author than of ingenious theories, than a lawgiver skilled in the practical details of government, and the useful application of laws to the great exigencies of civil society, they will speak more than the most laboured panegyric.

Nor was it in public duties alone that Mr. Jefferson was employed ; with a zeal alike honourable and useful, he devoted his attention to the personal welfare of those of the enemy, whom the chances of war had placed within his reach. It will be recollected, that congress had deemed it prudent to retain in America, the troops who had surrendered at Saratoga, until an authentic ratification of the convention, entered into by the British general, should be obtained from his government. In the mean time it was thought expedient, to remove them into the interior of the country, and the neighbourhood of Charlottesville, in Virginia, was selected as the place of their destination.

There they arrived early in the year 1779. The winter was uncommonly severe ; the barracks unfinished for want of labourers ; no sufficient stores of bread laid in ; and the roads rendered impassable by the inclemency of the weather, and the number of wagons which had lately traversed them. Mr. Jefferson, aided by Mr. Hawkins the commissary general, and the benevolent dispositions of his fellow citizens,

adopted every plan to alleviate the distresses of the troops, and to soften as much as possible the hardships of captivity. Their efforts were attended with success. The officers who were able to command money, rented houses and small farms in the neighbourhood, while the soldiers enlarged the barracks and improved their accommodations, so as in a short time to form a little community, flourishing and happy. These arrangements had scarcely been completed, when, in consequence of some powers lodged in them by congress, the governor and council of Virginia determined to remove the prisoners to another part of the state; this intention was heard by the captives themselves with distress, and by those amongst whom they were settled, with regret. Mr. Jefferson immediately addressed a letter to governor Henry, in which he stated in strong and glowing language, the impolicy and impropriety of such a measure. His appeal was successful, and the troops were permitted to remain. Indeed his hospitality and generous politeness to these unfortunate strangers, was such as to secure their lasting friendship and esteem. From them he received many letters, expressing the warmth of their attachment and gratitude; and in his subsequent travels through Europe, when chance again threw him into their society, they loaded him with civility and kindness, and spoke to their countrymen in warm terms of the hospitality of Virginia. When about to leave Charlottesville, the principal officers wrote to him, to renew their thanks, and to bid him adieu; the answer of Mr. Jefferson to one of them has been preserved. "The little attentions," he says, "you are pleased to magnify so much, never deserved a mention or a thought. Opposed as we happen to be in our sentiments of duty and honour, and anxious for contrary events, I shall, nevertheless, sincerely rejoice in every circumstance of happiness and safety which may

attend you personally." To another of them he thus wrote : "The very small amusements which it has been in my power to furnish, in order to lighten your heavy hours, by no means merited the acknowledgments you make. Their impression must be ascribed to your extreme sensibility rather than to their own weight. When the course of events shall have removed you to distant scenes of action, where laurels not moistened with the blood of my country, may be gathered, I shall urge my sincere prayers for your obtaining every honour and preferment which may gladden the heart of a soldier. On the other hand, should your fondness for philosophy resume its merited ascendancy, is it impossible to hope that this unexplored country may tempt your residence, by holding out materials wherewith to build a fame, founded on the happiness, and not on the calamities of human nature? Be this as it may, a philosopher or a soldier, I wish you personally many felicities."

On the first of June, 1779, the term for which Mr. Henry, the first republican governor of Virginia, had been chosen, having expired, Mr. Jefferson was elected to fill that office. The time was one at which its duties had become arduous and difficult; it was at that period of the war, when the British government, exasperated by the long protraction of hostilities, and goaded by their continual defeats, had increased the usual horrors of warfare, by the persecution of the wretched prisoners who fell into their hands. The governor of Virginia, among others, promptly expressed his determination to adopt, as the only resource against a system of warfare so barbarous and unheard of, a retaliation on the British prisoners in his power. "I shall give immediate orders," he says, in a letter to general Washington, "for having in readiness every engine, which the enemy have

contrived for the destruction of our unhappy citizens, captivated by them. The presentiment of these operations is shocking beyond expression. I pray heaven to avert them; but nothing in this world will do with such an enemy but proper firmness and decision!" This course, for a short time, produced on the part of the enemy an excess of cruelty, especially against the officers and soldiers of Virginia; it was, however, without avail; the measure was the last resort, brought on by a long course of unfeeling conduct, and the only remedy that was left. "There is nothing" said the governor in a letter to one of the prisoners, "you may be assured, consistent with the honour of your country, which we shall not at all times, be ready to do for the relief of yourself and companions in captivity. We know that ardent spirit and hatred for tyranny, which brought you into your present situation, will enable you to bear against it with the firmness which has distinguished you as a soldier, and to look forward with pleasure to the day when events shall take place, against which the wounded pride of your enemies will find no comfort, even from reflections on the most refined of the cruelties with which they have glutted themselves." The policy of the measure was proved by its ultimate success; and the British government, when taught by experience, acknowledged the correctness of a principle they had refused to listen to, when urged only by the dictates of humanity and the usages of civilized society.

In the year 1780, Virginia, which had hitherto been distant from the seat of actual warfare, was threatened with invasion from the south. In the spring, the ferocious Tarleton had made his appearance on her southern borders, marking his path with unusual barbarity. Immediately after him, followed the main army under lord Cornwallis. It was

then time for Virginia to exert herself. Troops were rapidly raised and sent off to the south, artillery and ammunition were collected, lines of communication established, and every preparation made to meet the enemy. It is needless to remark, that all the former habits and pursuits of the governor, had been of a kind little likely to fit him for military command ; but aware of the importance of energy and exertion, at such a crisis, he bent his mind to the new task which fortune had thrown upon him, with alacrity and ardour. " Our intelligence from the southward," he writes to general Washington, on the eleventh June, " is most lamentably defective. Though Charleston has now been in the hands of the enemy a month, we hear nothing of their movements, which can be relied upon. Rumours say that they are penetrating northward. To remedy this defect, I shall immediately establish a line of expresses from hence to the neighbourhood of their army, and send thither a sensible, judicious person, to give us information of their movements. This intelligence will, I hope, be conveyed at the rate of one hundred and twenty miles in the twenty-four hours. They set out to their stations to-morrow. I wish it were possible that a like speedy line of communication could be formed, from hence to your excellency's head quarters. Perfect and speedy information of what is passing in the south, might put it in your power perhaps to frame your measures by theirs. There is really nothing to oppose the progress of the enemy northward, but the cautious principle of the military art. North Carolina is without arms. They do not abound with us. Those we have are freely imparted to them ; but such is the state of their resources that they have not been able to move a single musket from this state to theirs. All the wagons we can collect here, have been furnished to the Baron De Kalb,

and are assembled for the march of two thousand five hundred men under general Stevens, of Culpepper, who will move on the nineteenth instant. I have written to congress to hasten supplies of arms and military stores for the southern states, and particularly to aid us with cartridge paper and boxes, the want of which articles, small as they are, renders our stores useless. The want of money cramps every effort. This will be supplied by the most unpalatable of all substitutes, force. Your excellency will readily conceive, that after the loss of one army, our eyes are turned towards the other, and that we comfort ourselves with the hope, that if any aids can be furnished by you, without defeating operations more beneficial to the union, they will be furnished. At the same time, I am happy to find that the wishes of the people go no further, as far as I have an opportunity of learning their sentiments. Could arms be furnished, I think this state and North Carolina would embody from ten to fifteen thousand militia immediately, and more, if necessary. I hope ere long to be able to give you a more certain statement of the enemy's, as well as our own situation."

The legislature, becoming fully aware of their danger, adopted the most vigorous measures for the increase and support of the southern army. They conferred on the governor new and extraordinary powers; and that officer exerted himself in every mode, which ingenuity could suggest, to ward off the approaching danger.

While however all eyes were turned to the south, a sudden attack in another quarter was the more disastrous, as it was the less expected.

Arnold, whose treachery seems to have increased the natural daring and recklessness of his temper, aware of the unprotected situation of Virginia on the sea board, formed a

plan for an attack on that quarter. He set sail from New York, with sixteen hundred men, and supported by a number of armed vessels, ascended James river, and landed about fifteen miles below Richmond. All the militia of the state, that could be supplied with arms, had been already called out, and placed in the neighbourhood of Williamsburg, under the orders of general Nelson. This event seemed to leave the governor almost without resource; he saw the enemy, within a few miles of the capital of the state, which was entirely undefended; he collected hastily about two hundred half armed militia, whom he placed under the command of baron Steuben, for the purpose of protecting the removal of the records and military stores across James river; he superintended their movements in person with the utmost zeal, courage, and prudence; and he was seen coolly issuing his orders, until the enemy had actually entered the lower part of the town, and begun to flank it with their light horse.

Although Arnold had thus succeeded in plundering and laying waste the country, the governor determined, if possible, that the traitor should not escape with impunity; he believed that a plan for his capture, prudently formed, and boldly executed, would be attended with success; this scheme he explains in a letter, written to general Muhlenberg, on the thirty-first of January, as follows:

“ Sir,—Acquainted as you are with the treasons of Arnold, I need say nothing for your information, or to give you a proper sentiment of them. You will readily suppose that it is above all things desirable to drag him from those, under whose wing he is now sheltered. On his march to and from this place, I am certain it might have been done with facility, by men of enterprise and firmness. I think it may still be

done, though perhaps not quite so easily. Having peculiar confidence in the men from the western side of the mountains, I meant, as soon as they should come down, to get the enterprise proposed to a chosen number of them, such whose courage and whose fidelity would be above all doubt. Your perfect knowledge of those men personally, and my confidence in your discretion, induce me to ask you to pick from among them, proper characters, in such numbers as you think best, to reveal to them our desire, and engage them to undertake to seize and bring off this greatest of all traitors. Whether this may be best effected by their going in as friends, and awaiting their opportunity, or otherwise, is left to themselves. The smaller the number the better, so that they may be sufficient to manage him. Every necessary caution must be used on their part, to prevent a discovery of their design by the enemy. I will undertake, if they are successful in bringing him off alive, that they shall receive five thousand guineas reward among them; and to men formed for such an enterprise, it must be a great incitement to know that their names will be recorded with glory in history, with those of Vanwert, Paulding and Williams. The enclosed order from Baron Steuben will authorize you to call for, and to dispose of any force you may think necessary to place in readiness, for covering the enterprise and securing the retreat of the party. Mr. Newton, the bearer of this, and to whom its contents are communicated in confidence, will provide men of trust, to go as guides. These may be associated in the enterprise, or not, as you please; but let the point be previously settled, that no difficulty may arise as to the parties entitled to participate in the reward. You know how necessary profound secrecy is in this business, even if it be not undertaken." Men were found without difficulty, bold enough and ready to undertake

this scheme ; but it was rendered unavailing by the cautious prudence of Arnold, who avoided every exposure to such a danger.

Frustrated in this plan, the governor turned his attention to another, on a bolder scale, in which he was to be aided by general Washington and the French fleet. The latter, then at Rhode Island, were to sail immediately for James river, to prevent the escape of the enemy by sea, while a large body of troops should be collected on shore, for the purpose of blockading them, and ultimately compelling a surrender. On the eighth of March, Mr. Jefferson thus writes to the commander in chief : " We have made on our part, every preparation which we were able to make. The militia proposed to operate, will be upwards of four thousand from this state, and one thousand or twelve hundred from Carolina, said to be under general Gregory. The enemy are at this time, in a great measure, blockaded by land, there being a force on the east side of Elizabeth river. They suffer for provisions, as they are afraid to venture far, lest the French squadron should be in the neighbourhood, and come upon them. Were it possible to block up the river, a little time would suffice to reduce them by want and desertions ; and would be more sure in its event than any attempt by storm." The French fleet, however, encountered, on their arrival at the Chesapeake a British squadron of equal, if not superior force, by which they were driven back ; by these means the plan was defeated, and Arnold again escaped.

The disasters of Virginia, and the difficulties of the governor, however, were not yet at an end. Arnold had scarcely left the coast, when Cornwallis entered the state on the southern frontier. Never was a country less prepared to repel invasion ; her troops had been drawn off to distant

quarters, her resources had been exhausted to supply other states, and she was alike destitute of military stores, and of funds to obtain them. The whole burden of affairs, too, had been thrown on the governor; the legislature had hastily adjourned, on the invasion of Arnold in January, to meet again at Charlottesville on the twenty-fourth of May; in the mean time he had no resource, but to make the best of the means which providence had given him, and to depend on that good fortune which had already so often befriended his country, at moments the most gloomy and unpromising. To resist invasion, the militia was his only force; and the resort even to this, was limited by the deficiency of arms. He used every effort, however, to increase its efficacy. When it was sent into the field, he called into service a number of officers who had resigned, or been thrown out of public employment by reductions of continental regiments for want of men, and gave them commands; an expedient, which, together with the aid of the old soldiers scattered in the ranks, produced a sudden and highly useful degree of skill, discipline, and subordination. Men were draughted for the regular regiments, and considerable detachments of the militia were sent to the south, and a number of horses, essentially necessary, were rapidly obtained by an expedient of Mr. Jefferson's. Instead of using a mercenary agency, he wrote to an individual, generally a member of assembly, in each of the counties where they were to be had, to purchase a specified number with the then expiring paper money. This expedient met with a success highly important to the common cause. Nor was it sufficient to protect his own state alone; aid was demanded for the Carolinas, and this, though increasing the destitution and distress at home, was furnished to a very considerable extent. At length, however, exhausted

by he refforts to aid her sister states, almost stript of arms, without money, and harassed on the east and on the west with formidable invasions, Virginia appeared at last without resource.

In this state of things, the twenty-fourth of May arrived, but it was not until the twenty-eighth that the legislature was formed at Charlottesville, to proceed to business. On that day the governor addressed the following letter to the commander in chief; the general view which it presents of the situation of the state, and the personal feelings of Mr. Jefferson, give it an importance, more than sufficient to compensate for its length.

“I have just been advised,” he writes on the twenty-eighth of May, “that the British have evacuated Petersburg, been joined by a considerable re-enforcement from New York, and crossed James river at Westover. They were, on the twenty-sixth instant, three miles advanced towards Richmond, at which place major general, the Marquis Fayette, lay with three thousand men, regulars and militia; that being the whole number we could arm, until the arrival of the eleven hundred stand of arms from Rhode Island, which are about this time at the place where our public stores are deposited. The whole force of the enemy within this state, from the best intelligence I have been able to get, is, I think, about seven thousand men, including the garrison left at Portsmouth. A number of privateers, which are constantly ravaging the shores of our rivers, prevent us from receiving any aid from the counties lying on navigable waters; and powerful operations meditated against our western frontier, by a joint force of British and Indian savages, have, as your excellency before knew, obliged us to embody between two and three thousand men in that quarter. Your excellency will judge

from this state of things, and from what you know of your own country, what it may probably suffer during the present campaign. Should the enemy be able to obtain no opportunity of annihilating the marquis's army, a small proportion of their force may yet restrain his movements effectually, while the greater part is employed in detachments to waste an unarmed country, and lead the minds of the people to acquiesce under those events, which they see no human power prepared to ward off. We are too far removed from the other scenes of war, to say whether the main force of the enemy be within this state; but I suppose they cannot any where spare so great an army for the operations of the field. Were it possible for this circumstance to justify in your excellency, a determination to lend us your personal aid, it is evident from the universal voice, that the presence of their beloved countryman, whose talents have so long been successfully employed in establishing the freedom of kindred states, to whose person they have still flattered themselves they retained some right, and have ever looked upon as their *dernier resort* in distress; that your appearance among them, I say, would restore full confidence of salvation, and would render them equal to whatever is not impossible. I cannot undertake to foresee and obviate the difficulties which lie in the way of such a resolution. The whole subject is before you, of which I see only detached parts; and your judgment will be formed on a view of the whole. Should the danger of the state, and its consequence to the union, be such as to render it best for the whole, that you should repair to its assistance, the difficulty would then be how to keep men out of the field. I have undertaken to hint this matter to your excellency, not only on my own sense of its importance to us, but at the solicitation of many members of weight in our legislature, which has

not yet assembled to speak its own desires. A few days will bring to me that relief, which the constitution has prepared for those oppressed with the labours of my office ; and a long declared resolution of relinquishing it to abler hands, has prepared my way for retirement to a private station ; still, as an individual, I should feel the comfortable effects of your presence, and have (what I thought could not have been) an additional motive for that gratitude, esteem, and respect, which I have long felt for your excellency."

On the second of June, the term for which Mr. Jefferson had been elected expired, and he returned to the situation of a private citizen, after having conducted the affairs of his state, through a period of difficulty and danger, without any parallel in its preceding or subsequent history, and with a prudence and energy that might have gained him more fame, had the times been less unpropitious, but which from that very reason have been and will be more appreciated and honoured, in succeeding times.

Two days after his retirement from the government, and when on his estate at Monticello, intelligence was suddenly brought that Tarleton, at the head of two hundred and fifty horse, had left the main army for the purpose of surprising and capturing the members of assembly at Charlottesville. The house had just met, and was about to commence business, when the alarm was given ; they had scarcely taken time to adjourn informally, to meet at Staunton on the seventh, when the enemy entered the village, in the confident expectation of an easy prey. The escape was indeed narrow, but no one was taken. In pursuing the legislature, however, the governor was not forgotten ; a troop of horse under a captain M'Leod had been despatched to Monticello, fortunately with no better success. The intelligence received at Char-

lottesville was soon conveyed thither, the distance between the two places being very short. Mr. Jefferson immediately ordered a carriage to be in readiness to carry off his family, who, however, breakfasted at leisure with some guests. Soon after breakfast, and when the visitors had left the house, a neighbour rode up in full speed, with the intelligence that a troop of horse was then ascending the hill. Mr. Jefferson now sent off his family, and after a short delay for some indispensable arrangements, mounted his horse, and taking a course through the woods, joined them at the house of a friend, where they dined. It would scarcely be believed by those not acquainted with the fact, that this flight of a single and unarmed man from a troop of cavalry, whose whole legion, too, was within supporting distance, and whose main object was his capture, has been the subject of volumes of reproach, in prose and poetry, serious and sarcastic.

In times of difficulty and danger, it is seldom that the actions of the wisest and the best can escape without censure. Where they are not the marks of malevolence, they are yet dwelt on with morbid distrust by the discontented and the timid; they are contrasted by every speculative reasoner, with the fanciful schemes which his own imagination has suggested; and if they do not chance to be crowned with unexpected success, the failure is attributed to intrinsic weakness, rather than to unavoidable accident. In the preceding pages of this memoir, a rapid, and indeed an insufficient sketch has been recorded of the public acts of Mr. Jefferson, during the singularly eventful period in which he was placed at the head of the government in Virginia. The truth of those facts may be relied on. From them, a reader of the present day, far removed from the bustle and feelings of the times, may form a calm judgment of the principles

and talents of the man, when placed in this station of unexpected difficulty. There is little danger in asserting, that such a judgment will be as favourable to the zeal and talents of the statesman, as it will be honourable to the feelings and patriotism of the man. It would, therefore, seem almost useless to record imputed errors and unfounded charges with regard to him, which have passed into oblivion by the lapse of years, were it not in some degree a duty, not to pass unnoticed, events which, in their own day at least, excited considerable attention.

The meeting of the legislature at Staunton, was attended by several members who had not been present at Richmond, at the period of Arnold's incursion. One of these, Mr. George Nicholas, actuated, it is said, by no unkind feelings, yet it must be acknowledged with a patriotism somewhat too ardent, accused the late governor of great remissness in his measures on that occasion, and moved for an inquiry relative to them. To this, neither Mr. Jefferson nor his friends had the least objection, nor did they make the slightest opposition. The ensuing session of the legislature, was the period fixed for the investigation, but before it arrived, Mr. Nicholas, convinced that the charges were unfounded, in the most honourable and candid manner declined the farther prosecution of the affair. In the mean time, that he might be placed on equal ground for meeting the inquiry, one of the representatives of his county resigned his seat, and Mr. Jefferson was unanimously elected in his place. When the house assembled, no one appeared to bring forward the investigation ; he, however, rose in his place, and recapitulating the charges which had been made, stated in brief terms his own justification. His remarks were no sooner

concluded, than the house passed unanimously the following resolution :

“ Resolved, That the sincere thanks of the general assembly, be given to our former governor, Thomas Jefferson, for his impartial, upright, and attentive administration whilst in office. The assembly wish, in the strongest manner, to declare the high opinion they entertain of Mr. Jefferson’s ability, rectitude, and integrity, as chief magistrate of this commonwealth, and mean, by thus publicly avowing their opinion, to obviate and to remove all unmerited censure.”

It is due to Mr. Nicholas to state, that in a publication some time afterwards, he made an honourable acknowledgment of the erroneous views he had entertained on the subject. The same candour has not marked all the opponents of Mr. Jefferson ; but we are not, however, now to learn, that in the violence of political asperity, circumstances long proved, and generally acknowledged to be incorrect, are brought forward with no inconsiderable effrontery, and the mild and virtuous must be content to wait until time has swept away the fabrications and assertions of faction, and confirmed that which is founded in honesty and truth.

Mr. Jefferson has already appeared before us, as a writer of no ordinary talents ; but it has been in one point of view solely, that of a politician. Great as were his skill and knowledge as a statesman, and active as were his labours for the public good, we find him in the year 1781, snatching sufficient leisure, amid the tumult and confusion of politics and war, to compose a work devoted exclusively to science. M. De Marbois, the secretary of the French legation in the United States, at the suggestion it is supposed of

his own court, proposed to Mr. Jefferson a number of questions relative to the state of Virginia, embracing a general view of its geography, natural productions, statistics, government, history, and laws. To these, Mr. Jefferson returned answers full of learning and research ; so much so, that the gentleman to whom they were addressed, found it necessary to have a few copies printed in the French language, for the use exclusively, however, of his friends, among whom the work had excited great interest. From one of these copies, a translation was surreptitiously made into English ; and this induced Mr. Jefferson at length, in the year 1787, to publish the work himself, under the simple title it still retains, of “ Notes on Virginia.” The principal charms of this little volume, are the unpretending simplicity of its style, and the variety of its information. After a lapse of more than forty years, we are surprised at the slow advances we have made in the subjects of which it treats ; and when we reflect on the wild state of the country at that period, the comparatively narrow bounds within which was contained all of civilization and knowledge, we look with astonishment at the facts, that industry could thus accumulate. Even if the length or nature of this memoir would permit it, it seems hardly necessary to analyze a work so generally known ; yet one might dwell with pleasure on many of the subjects which its pages embrace, and find in them a cheerful relief from the tedious uniformity of political history. The fanciful theories of Buffon, have met their refutation in the increasing intelligence of succeeding times—*opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat* ; yet one reads with satisfaction, if not with pleasure, the successful but simple refutation of the greatest philosopher of his day, by a citizen of an almost unknown and despised country, who had

thrown aside for a moment, the sword and the portfolio, to amuse himself in the more congenial investigations of science. The refutation of absurdity, has often proved the mother of wisdom ; the wild visions of Fulmer, produced the matchless dissertations of Locke. In the interesting picture of Indian habits and manners ; the records of their untutored eloquence ; the vindication of their bravery, their generosity, and their virtue—in the delineation of the character, the fidelity, the kindly feelings of the enslaved negro race, whose champion he ever was, alike in the times of colonial subjection, and of established freedom—in his investigations relative to religious and political liberty—in his researches in science, philosophy, and antiquity, every reader will find a great deal to instruct and amuse. He will not perhaps regret, that he chose public life as the great theatre of his ambition, but he will acknowledge, that his fame would probably have been as great, in the more peaceful pursuits of science.

About the close of the year 1782, Mr. Jefferson was appointed a minister plenipotentiary, to join the commissioners in Europe, who were to determine on the conditions of a treaty of peace, which it was expected would soon be entered into. In December he arrived at Philadelphia, in order to embark. Congress immediately ordered, that during his stay in that city, he should have full access to the archives of the government.

The minister of France offered him the French frigate *Romulus*, which was then at Baltimore, for his passage ; but, before the ice would permit her to leave the port, intelligence was received that preliminaries of peace between the United States and Great Britain had been signed. Mr. Jefferson wrote to congress from Baltimore,

to inquire whether the occasion of his services was not passed, and they, of course, dispensed with his leaving America.

On the sixth of June, 1783, Mr. Jefferson was again elected a delegate to congress, from the state of Virginia, but he did not take his seat in that body until the fourth of November following. The part which he immediately acted, was of course a prominent one, and we find him at once engaged in all the principal measures that occupied the public attention. Early in December, letters were received from the commissioners in France, accompanied with the definitive treaty between the United States and Great Britain, which had been signed at Paris on the third of September. They were immediately referred to a committee, of which Mr. Jefferson was chairman. On the fourteenth of January, 1784, on the report of this committee, the treaty was unanimously ratified, thus putting an end to the eventful struggle between the two countries, and confirming the independence which had already been gained. On the thirtieth of March he was elected chairman of congress, and chairman also of a grand committee, instructed to revise the institution of the treasury department, and report such alterations as they should deem expedient. This they did, in an able report on the fifth of April, embracing a general and comprehensive view of the finances of the country; a subject of infinite difficulty, and presenting obstacles which threatened to disturb the harmony of the union, to embarrass its councils, and obstruct its operations.

About this period, an opportunity was offered to Mr. Jefferson, of expressing again, as he had already so frequently done, his earnest desire to provide for the emancipation of the negroes, and the entire abolition of slavery in the

United States. Being appointed chairman of a committee, to which was assigned the task of forming a plan for the temporary government of the Western Territory, he introduced into it the following clause: "That after the year 1800 of the Christian æra, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said states, otherwise than in punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been convicted to have been personally guilty." When the report of the committee was presented to congress, these words were, however, struck out.

On the seventh of May, congress resolved that a minister plenipotentiary should be appointed, in addition to Mr. Adams and Dr. Franklin, for the purpose of negotiating treaties of commerce. To this office Mr. Jefferson was immediately elected, and orders were issued to the agent of marine, to provide suitable accommodations for his passage to Europe.

In July, he sailed from the United States, and joined the other commissioners at Paris, in the following month. Full powers were given to them, to form alliances of amity and commerce with foreign states, and on the most liberal principles. In this useful design, they were occupied for a year, but not with the success that congress had anticipated ; they succeeded in their negotiations, only with the governments of Morocco and Prussia. The treaty with the latter power is so remarkable for some of the provisions it contains, that it may be looked upon as an experiment in diplomacy and national law. By it, blockades of every description were abolished, the flag covered the property, and contrabands were exempted from confiscation, though they might be employed for the use of the captor, on payment of their full value. This, it is said, is the only convention ever made by Ame-

rica, in which the latter stipulation is introduced, nor is it known to exist in any other modern treaty.

With Great Britain, also, a negotiation was attempted, but without success. The treaty of the preceding year had indeed dissolved for ever the bands by which the two countries were united, but the ties of consanguinity, religion, manners, and perhaps of interest, seemed to point out by nature, an alliance somewhat more intimate, than that which usually exists between independent states. It was known too that soon after the preliminary articles of peace had been concluded, Mr. Pitt, the young chancellor of the exchequer, with the liberal candour of youth, and a political sagacity not yet tinctured by national selfishness, or absorbed by more engrossing plans of infinitely less general utility, had introduced into the house of commons a bill for regulating the intercourse between the two nations, on principles of reciprocal benefit, which would have gone far to establish between them lasting relations of peace and prosperity. It is true, a change in the administration had prevented the passage of this measure, but its advocates had since returned to power, and it was in itself so highly advantageous to both parties, that the American commissioners deemed it expedient to attempt its renewal in the form of a commercial treaty. To effect this, Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams crossed over to London; and so anxious were they to promote a cordial connexion between the two countries, that among the terms they proposed to offer, was a mutual exchange of naturalization to the citizens and vessels of either nation, in every thing relating to commerce or commercial navigation. On reaching London, they were received by the government with great respect; but whether from some remains of hostile feeling and injured pride, or from the pressure of domestic

affairs, injured as they had been by a long and unsuccessful war ; or what is most probable, from a determination to support the selfish regulations of the navigation system, from which she had been somewhat driven by the apprehension of injury to her commerce, in consequence of the revolution, but to which she joyfully returned on perceiving the weakness of the confederation, the discordant plans of the several states, and the interest she had succeeded in establishing ; from one or all of these causes, for several years after the treaty of independence, Great Britain does not appear to have bestowed much attention on her intercourse with America. Every attempt to procure a conference was evaded, the period for which the general commission was issued, was on the eve of expiring, and after a fruitless visit of seven weeks to London, Mr. Jefferson returned to Paris.

On the tenth of March, 1785, Mr. Jefferson was unanimously appointed by congress, to succeed Dr. Franklin as minister plenipotentiary at the court of Versailles ; and on the expiration of his commission in October, 1787, he was again elected to the same honourable situation. He remained in France until October, 1789.

The eminent rank which Dr. Franklin had obtained as a philosopher, before he was appointed a commissioner to Paris, had in no small degree facilitated his introduction there, and greatly aided the success of his political mission ; that a man of such acknowledged distinction in science, should have been produced by these states, gave them a character beyond that usually bestowed on the colonists of a remote and unknown country, and strongly contributed to bring them forward into the rank of nations. These features of Dr. Franklin's character, were eminently supported by Mr.

Jefferson, and it was certainly no common circumstance, that at a time when the spirit of political and philosophical investigation, especially so far as it applied to the state of society, had made such rapid advances, and produced so many great men, a country scarcely yet heard of in Europe, should furnish such practical lessons in freedom and the assertion of liberty, and two men so fitted by their talents and the congeniality of their dispositions, to mingle with the most distinguished statesmen and philosophers of the age.

While Mr. Jefferson resided in France, he was engaged in many diplomatic negotiations of considerable importance to this country, though not of sufficient general interest, to require here a lengthened recital. The great questions which had so long occupied the public mind, were fitted to arrest the attention of the most thoughtless, affecting as they did, the policy of nations and the fate of empires; but the details which arise out of the interpretation of treaties, or the measures which are necessary to increase their effect, and to remedy their deficiencies, are interesting only to him who studies the minute points of political history. These only were the objects, which could claim the attention of the minister to France, at this period; they did not call forth any prominent display of his great and various talents, but they required no ordinary address, involved as they were by the skilful intrigues of such ministers as Vergennes and Calonne, and opposed, for the most part, by all the men of influence, who thought that their interests might be compromised or endangered. Among the principal benefits then obtained, and continued to the United States until the period of the French revolution, were the abolition of several monopolies, and the free admission into France of tobacco, rice,

whale oil, salted fish, and flour; and of the two latter articles into the French West India islands.

During the period of his ministry, Mr. Jefferson took advantage of the leisure he occasionally enjoyed to make an excursion to Holland, and another to Italy. Each offered a useful lesson to a philosopher and statesman, the representative of a young and rising nation. The one displayed the successful efforts of patient industry, gradually removing the difficulties which nature had created and neglect increased. In the fair clime and fertile soil of the other, he saw that arbitrary power changes the field of plenty to a desert, and that though the Italian might look round on the stupendous ruins which proclaimed at once the power and the freedom of his ancestors, he had inherited nothing of their lofty spirit, but was rather a stranger, wandering amid the relics of foreign grandeur, than the descendant of a nation whose humblest citizens were mightier than kings. It was, however, in the gaiety, the learning, the taste, elegance, and hospitality of Paris, that he found pleasures most congenial to his disposition. Years had passed away, loaded with public cares, since he had indulged in those pursuits, which formed so favourite an occupation for his mind; and now, placed at once in the midst of learning and elegance, admired for his genius, beloved for his modesty and kindness, received with open arms by the men whose names were most conspicuous for their talents and virtues, it will be readily believed, that he enjoyed the new scene around him with peculiar interest. The Abbé Morrellet translated his little work on Virginia, Condorcet and D'Alembert claimed him as their friend, and he was invited and welcomed among the literary institutions and circles of Paris. His letters, written at this time to his friends in America, display the versatility of his genius, and

the attention he constantly bestowed on whatever was calculated to embellish or benefit society. Perhaps, indeed, of his long and not unprosperous life, he would have fixed on this as the period of greatest enjoyment; as a statesman and patriot he was honoured, respected, and loved; of rank and fortune he had enough to supply his wants and gratify his ambition; in the prospect of the future there was little to add to his present happiness, while it was surrounded with the uncertainty which ever attends the most successful, in the career of public life.

It was while Mr. Jefferson was in France, that the difficulties of this country, for want of a general government, were more and more felt; they were greatly increased by the failure of treaties abroad, which might have given a system to our foreign relations, that could scarcely be expected, while the states presented a social form so feebly connected; the federal constitution, therefore, had been framed from a general conviction of its necessity. But, however Mr. Jefferson had contributed to impress this necessity, and had communicated his ideas to his friends, he of course had no personal share in its formation. That the structure of it would awaken his attention, there could be no doubt; and it appears, that his friends were early desirous in obtaining his views with regard to it. In a late publication it is asserted, that so soon as 1787, he had expressed his sentiments of it, in a letter to Mr. Madison; that letter has not been published; but it seems that soon after, Mr. Jefferson was written to by colonel Forrest of Georgetown, requesting his opinion of the new constitution, and that he sent to him, in reply, a copy or extract of his letter to Mr. Madison. As this has every appearance of authenticity, and certainly expresses Mr. Jefferson's sentiments on this interesting sub-

ject, far better than any abridgment of them would do, no apology is necessary for inserting it at length.

“ I like much,” he says, “ the general idea of framing a government which should go on of itself peaceably, without needing continual recurrence to the state legislatures. I like the organization of the government into legislative, judiciary, and executive. I like the power given the legislature to levy taxes, and for that reason solely, I approve of the greater house being chosen by the people directly : for though I think a house so chosen will be very far inferior to the present congress, will be very illy qualified to legislate for the Union, for foreign nations, &c. yet this evil does not weigh against the good of preserving inviolate the fundamental principle, that the people are not to be taxed but by representatives chosen immediately by themselves. I am captivated by the compromise of the opposite claims of the great and little states, of the latter to equal, and the former to proportional influence. I am much pleased, too, with the substitution of the method of voting by persons instead of that of voting by states ; and I like the negative given to the executive conjointly with a third of either house, though I should have liked it better had the judiciary been associated for that purpose, or invested separately with a similar power. There are other good things of less moment. I will now tell you what I do not like. First, the omission of a bill of rights, providing clearly, and without the aid of sophisms, for freedom of religion, freedom of the press, protection against standing armies, restriction of monopolies, the eternal and unremitting force of the habeas corpus laws, and trials by jury in matters of fact, triable by the laws of the land, and not by the law of nations. To say, as Mr. Wilson does, that a bill of rights was not necessary, because all is

reserved in the case of the general government which is not given, while in the particular ones, all is given which is not reserved, might do for the audience to which it was addressed, but it is surely a gratis dictum, the reverse of which might just as well be said ; and it is opposed by strong inferences from the body of the instrument, as well as from the omission of the clause of our present confederation, which had made the reservation in express terms. It was hard to conclude, because there has been a want of uniformity among the states as to the cases triable by jury, because some have been so incautious as to dispense with this mode of trial in certain cases ; therefore, the more prudent states shall be reduced to the same level of calamity. It would have been much more just and wise to have concluded the other way, that, as most of the states had preserved with jealousy this sacred paladium of liberty, those who had wandered should be brought back to it ; and to have established general right rather than general wrong. For I consider all the ill as established, which may be established. I have a right to nothing which another has a right to take away ; and congress will have a right to take away trials by jury in all civil cases. Let me add, that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular ; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inferences.

“The second feature I dislike, and strongly dislike, is the abandonment, in every instance, of the principle of rotation in office, and most particularly in the case of the president. Reason and experience tell us that the first magistrate will always be re-elected, if he may be re-elected. He is then an officer for life. This once observed, it becomes of so much consequence to certain nations to have a friend or a foe at

the head of our affairs, that they will interfere, with money and with arms. A Galloman or an Angloman will be supported by the nation he befriends. If once elected, and at a second or third election outvoted by one or two votes, he will pretend false votes, foul play, hold possession of the reins of government, be supported by the states voting for him, especially if they be the central ones, lying in a compact body themselves, and separating their opponents, and they will be aided by one nation in Europe, while the majority are aided by another. The election of a president of America, some years hence, will be much more interesting to certain nations of Europe, than even the election of a king of Poland was.

“ Reflect on all the instances in history, ancient and modern, of elective monarchies, and say if they do not give foundation for my fears—the Roman emperors, the popes, while they were of any importance, the German emperors, till they became hereditary in practice, the kings of Poland, the deys of the Ottoman dependencies. It may be said, that if elections are to be attended with these disorders, the seldomer they are repeated, the better. But experience says, that, to free them from disorder, they must be rendered less interesting by a necessity of change. No foreign power, nor domestic party, will waste their blood and money to elect a person who must go out at the end of a short period. The power of removing every fourth year by the vote of the people, is a power which they will not exercise; and if they were disposed to exercise it, they would not be permitted. The king of Poland is removable every day by the diet, but they never remove him, nor would Russia, the emperor, &c. permit them to do it. Smaller objections are, the appeal on matters of fact as well as law; and the binding all persons,

legislative, executive, and judiciary, by oath to maintain that constitution. I do not pretend to decide what would be the best method of procuring the establishment of the manifold good things in this constitution, and getting rid of the bad ; whether by adopting it in hopes of future amendment ; or, after it shall have been duly weighed and canvassed by the people, after seeing the parts they generally dislike, and those they generally approve, to say to them, ‘ we see now what you wish ; you are willing to give to your federal government such and such powers ; but you wish at the same time, to have such and such fundamental rights secured to you, and certain sources of convulsion taken away ; be it so ; send together your deputies again, let them establish your fundamental rights by a sacrosanct declaration, and let them pass the parts of the constitution you have approved. These will give powers to your federal government sufficient for your happiness.’ This is what might be said, and would probably produce a speedy, more perfect, and more permanent form of government. At all events, I hope you will not be discouraged from making other trials, if the present one should fail ; we are never permitted to despair of the commonwealth.

“I have thus told you freely what I like and what I dislike, merely as matter of curiosity: for I know it is not in my power to offer matter of information to your judgment, which has been formed after hearing and weighing every thing which the wisdom of man could offer on these subjects. I own I am not a friend to a very energetic government ; it is always oppressive ; it places the governors indeed more at their ease, but at the expense of the people. The late rebellion in Massachusetts has given more alarm than I think it should have done. Calculate that one rebellion in thirteen states, in the course of eleven years, is but one for each state

in a century and a half. No country should be so long without one, nor will any degree of power in the hands of government prevent insurrections. In England, where the hand of power is heavier than with us, there are seldom half a dozen years without an insurrection. In France, where it is still heavier, but less despotic, as Montesquieu supposes, than in some other countries, and where there are always two or three hundred thousand men ready to crush insurrections, there have been three in the course of the three years I have been here, in every one of which greater numbers were engaged than in Massachusetts, and a great deal more blood was spilt. In Turkey, where the sole nod of the despot is death, insurrections are the events of every day. Compare again the ferocious depredations of their insurgents with the order, the moderation, and the almost self-extinguishment of ours, and say, finally, whether peace is best preserved by giving energy to the government, or information to the people. This last is the most certain, and the most legitimate engine of government. Educate and inform the whole mass of the people, enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order, and they will preserve it; and it requires no very high degree of education to convince them of this; they are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty. After all, it is my principle that the will of the majority should prevail. If they approve the proposed constitution in all its parts, I shall concur in it cheerfully, in hopes they will amend it, whenever they shall find it works wrong. This reliance cannot deceive us, as long as we remain virtuous; and I think we shall be so, as long as agriculture is our principal object, which will be the case while there remain vacant lands in any part of America. When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe,

we shall become corrupt as in Europe, and go to eating one another as they do there. I have tired you by this time with disquisitions which you have already heard repeated by others a thousand and a thousand times, and therefore shall only add the assurance of my esteem and attachment."

In the month of October, 1789, Mr. Jefferson obtained leave of absence for a short time, and returned to the United States. While he was abroad, the federal constitution, the formation of which we have mentioned, and relative to which we have given his views, had been regularly ratified by the requisite number of states, general Washington had been raised unanimously to the presidential chair, and the new government had been successfully organized. In filling the executive offices, the president had, with that wisdom which marked all the acts of his public life, carefully selected those whose talents or previous employments, rendered them peculiarly fit for the duties of the stations to which they were appointed. After his arrival from France, and while on his way to Virginia, Mr. Jefferson received a letter from the president, offering him the option of becoming secretary of state, or returning to France, as minister plenipotentiary to that court. His feelings and his habits, alike urged him to the latter, but he could not, and did not refuse to acquiesce in the very strong desire expressed by the president, that he would afford the aid of his talents to the administration at home.

Of all the offices under the government of the United States, there is no one, perhaps, which calls for the exercise of such various abilities, such extensive knowledge of laws and facts, such prompt decision on questions involving principles of the highest political import, as the department of state; and in proportion to the infancy of the office itself, and the new and

peculiar situation of the government, was the difficulty of the task assumed by Mr. Jefferson. The subsequent events of his political life have been tinged by the hue of party, and perhaps the time has not arrived when we can view them with strict impartiality, and weigh the policy of his measures, without dwelling too much on circumstances merely temporary or local. But all unite in the candid acknowledgment, that the duties of this station were performed with a prudence, intelligence, and zeal, honourable to himself, and useful to his country. In the intercourse with foreign nations, the laws of a strict neutrality, at a period of peculiar difficulty, were maintained with unyielding firmness and consummate ability; the dignity of the nation was remembered and supported; and the interests of the citizens were cherished and protected. At home, he turned his attention to objects of a minuter character, but of equal importance; he laid before congress, from time to time, reports on various branches of domestic policy, which displayed at once the extent and variety of his genius, the depth of his information, and the zeal with which he applied them both to the peculiar duties of his situation. It has been observed, that these papers evince not only the feelings of a patriot and the judgment of an accomplished statesman, but display, at the same time, uncommon talents and knowledge as a mathematician and natural philosopher, the deepest research as an historian, and even an enlarged and intimate acquaintance with the business and concerns of a merchant.

Mr. Jefferson had scarcely entered on his office, when congress referred to him a subject whose nature and importance called for the exercise of a mature judgment, while its intricacy was such, as to require in the investigation, more than ordinary scientific knowledge. They directed him to

prepare and report a plan, for establishing a uniform system of currency, weights, and measures. This was a subject which, it was admitted on all hands, demanded very serious attention. It had already attracted the notice of the most enlightened European nations; and a partial experiment in one branch, that of the public currency, had been received throughout the United States, with general approbation and unexpected success. The established system of weights and measures, was alike inconvenient and absurd. In the ages of feudal ignorance, when the sallies of passion, the dictates of unrestrained ambition, or the gratification of each changing caprice, were all that a monarch asked as the foundation of his laws, it was at least not inconsistent, that the length of his arm or foot should regulate the measures of the nation. But the necessities of modern commercial intercourse, seem to demand a scale more certain and convenient; while the improvements of modern science, offered standards of unerring correctness and uniformity. The first object that presents itself in such an inquiry, is the discovery of some measure of invariable length. For this purpose, Mr. Jefferson proposed to select a pendulum vibrating seconds; and after answering the various objections which may be made to such a standard, he submits to congress two alternative plans for its adoption. By the first, he proposes, that if, in the opinion of congress, the difficulty of changing the established habits of the nation, renders it expedient to retain the present weights and measures, yet that they should be rendered uniform and invariable, by bringing them to the same invariable standard. With this view, he enters minutely into the details of the present system, its history, the remarkable coincidence to be discovered in some of its varieties, its useless inconsisten-

cies, and the extreme ease, and trifling variation, with which it may be rendered uniform and stable. But, in the second place, he proceeds to say, “if it be thought, that either now or at any future time, the citizens of the United States may be induced to undertake a thorough reformation of their whole system of measures, weights, and coins, reducing every branch to the same decimal ratio already established in their coins, and thus bringing the calculation of the principal affairs of life within the arithmetic of every man who can multiply and divide plain numbers, greater changes will be necessary.”

These changes he points out briefly and distinctly ; as being such as are easy of introduction, and useful both to the citizens of our own and foreign countries. “A gradual introduction,” he concludes, “would lessen the inconveniences which might attend too sudden a substitution, even of an easier, for a more difficult system. After a given term, for instance, it might begin in the custom-houses, where the merchants would become familiarized to it. After a further term, it might be introduced into all legal proceedings ; and merchants and traders in foreign commodities might be required to use it in their dealings with one another. After a still further term, all other descriptions of people might receive it into common use. Too long a postponement, on the other hand, would increase the difficulties of its reception with the increase of our population.”

This valuable document is still before the country. A cautious deliberation, a natural attachment to long established usage, a deference to existing prejudices, perhaps the acknowledged difficulties in every system, have hitherto prevented any change in the existing laws ; but the subject has demanded, and so often received, during half a century, the

attention of distinguished philosophers and enlightened statesmen, in this country, and in France, England, and Spain, that the hope does not appear altogether groundless, of establishing by their mutual efforts, a grand, useful, and general system. Whether this be the case or not, however, we trust that the views of Mr. Jefferson will never be lost sight of among his own countrymen, and that an important improvement will not be relinquished, from a fear that their habits are so firmly fixed as to preclude its introduction. The partial failure of a similar attempt in France could afford no argument against it; the scheme was there, one of the hasty plans of the revolutionary government, blended with others less necessary and judicious, precipitately adopted, and carelessly abandoned; it was introduced among a people brought up in the midst of ancient prejudices, and comparatively ignorant and unenlightened, who still preserved the customs, and held in reverence many of the superstitions of their ancestors, and were naturally reluctant to admit the improvements of science. Such, however, could not be the result, in a nation where reason and improvement hold the sway they do in the United States. The evident advantage of a new system, quickly wrought a change in their currency, connected as it is so intimately with all the relations of social intercourse, and had the provisions of the report which we have mentioned, been at once adopted, it is not improbable that we should be now successfully enjoying all the benefits of a system founded in science.

On the eighteenth of January, 1791, Mr. Jefferson made a report, as secretary of state, on the subject of tonnage duties payable by France. Very soon after the meeting of the first congress, the same subject had been discussed in that body, with considerable animation, and an act had passed the

house of representatives, embracing a discrimination in these duties highly favourable to France. The principle thus adopted, coincided with the general sentiments of the nation, and appeared to be called for, not by this circumstance only, but by the strongest dictates of national gratitude, as well as those of sound policy. The discrimination, however, was rejected by the senate, and the house of representatives were obliged reluctantly to yield. What it was thus deemed inexpedient to grant, even as a matter of favour or policy, the French government demanded as a right, under the treaty of amity and commerce of 1778. The demand was referred to Mr. Jefferson, by the president, and elicited from him the able report to which we have alluded. In this he clearly proved, that the article of the treaty on which the French government founded their claim, was evidently meant to extend no further than to the exemption of the United States from a duty from which other favoured nations were also exempted, and that in return France could claim of our government, no greater advantages than favoured nations also received from us. That if the article in question had a more extended relation, it applied reciprocally to each government, and would lead to the mutual abolition of duties, highly useful to both, and to consequences in which it was hardly conceivable, that either party could see its interest. But he appears to incline to the opinion, that if France persisted in claiming this exemption, there were extrinsic causes which might justify, and even render advisable, some relaxation in her favour ; not on the grounds on which it was demanded, but from the effect it would have on the finances, revenue, and commerce of our own country. This report, the president immediately submitted to the senate of the United States.

But the foreign relations of the country, were not the only subject, on which the opinions of congress were divided, during the session of 1791. The secretary of the treasury, in introducing his celebrated system of finance, had recommended the establishment of a national bank, as necessary to its easy and prosperous administration. A bill, conforming to the plan he suggested, was sent down from the senate, and was permitted to proceed unmolested, in the house of representatives, to a third reading. On the final question, however, a great, and it would seem an unexpected opposition was made to its passage ; and after a debate of considerable length, which was supported on both sides with ability, and with that ardour which was naturally excited by the importance attached by each party to the principle in contest, the question was put, and the bill carried in the affirmative by a majority of nineteen voices.

The point which had been agitated with so much zeal in the house of representatives, was examined not less deliberately by the executive. The advice of each minister, with his reasoning in support of it, was required in writing, and their arguments were considered by the president with all that attention which the magnitude of the question, and the interest taken in it by the opposing parties, so eminently required.

The opinion of Mr. Jefferson, and it agreed with that of the attorney general, was decided. He believed that congress, in the passage of the bill, had clearly transcended the powers granted them by the constitution. That as a body, with limited authority, they were strictly confined to the exercise of those powers which were granted to them, and that to their exercise, an establishment of such vast power and influence, was neither incidental nor necessary. That

even if a free interpretation of the constitution, seemed to authorize that which was no where expressly allowed, it was still better for those who were exerting merely a delegated power, to confine themselves within limits which were well known, and where their power was universally acknowledged, than to assume as a right, what was at least considered as doubtful, by a large and intelligent portion of their constituents.

The views of the secretary of the treasury were equally decided, in favour of the establishment. The president, after receiving their opinions, weighing their reasons, and examining the subject, deliberately made up his mind in favour of the constitutionality of the law, and gave it the sanction of his name. This circumstance, together with the renewal of the charter of the bank, at a subsequent period, may perhaps be considered sufficient, to settle the legality, as well as the policy, of the measure; yet none will regret that it was adopted with so much hesitation, and that it led to so serious a discussion of the fundamental principles of our government. It was a matter of high importance, at that early period, when experience had afforded no lessons, when the remote effects and bearings of any act were unknown, and when the people were naturally and properly jealous of the slightest infringement of the rights they had reserved, that nothing which could be construed, even by the ignorant, into the unwarranted assumption of power, should be done without the utmost calmness, inquiry, and deliberation.

On the first of February, 1791, Mr. Jefferson presented to the house of representatives, an elaborate and valuable report, on the subject of the cod and whale fisheries. Before the revolution, a large number of seamen, and a great amount of tonnage, were successfully employed in this trade; but

during the war it had been almost annihilated, and now required the immediate and efficient aid of the government to restore it. It was too valuable to be neglected. To a maritime nation, its preservation was of vital and acknowledged importance. It afforded employment and subsistence to the inhabitants of a sandy and rocky district, who had no resource in agriculture; by augmenting the quantity of food, it reduced the prices of all the necessaries of life, and thus improved the condition of the labouring classes, especially on the sea coast; it was the means of rearing and supporting a hardy race of men, useful alike in extending and defending the commerce of the country, as it afforded a sure nursery of excellent seamen, both for the public vessels, and the rapidly increasing trade of the United States; an object of immense importance, when the scarcity of labour, and the readiness with which employment could be found, in less arduous pursuits, were taken into view. Impressed with these considerations, congress very early determined to give the subject that investigation, which its importance demanded. The report of Mr. Jefferson was accordingly made. In it he enters with sufficient minuteness, into an historical view of the rise and progress of the trade, both among ourselves and foreign nations; he points out distinctly the facilities afforded by our situation, the cheapness and excellence of our vessels, and the superiority of our mariners; the disadvantages under which we labour, from the prohibitory policy of other nations, and the means they have used, directly and indirectly, to destroy our trade; and concludes with recommending to congress, the adoption of such measures as he conceives sufficient to restore the confidence and energy of those engaged in it, to defeat the efforts of foreign governments, and open new markets for our enterprise. The

utility of these measures was acknowledged, and the adoption of this policy has secured to us a branch of trade and domestic enterprise, which cannot be too highly appreciated.

Towards the close of this year, 1791, Mr. Jefferson became involved in a discussion with Mr. Hammond, the British minister, of considerable length and importance. It arose, in the first instance, out of the provisions in the original treaty of peace, between the United States and Great Britain. Soon after the termination of the war, each party had charged the other with a violation of its engagements. The charge could not be entirely controverted by either. At length, however, the opening of a diplomatic intercourse, by the reception of Mr. Hammond and the appointment of Mr. Pinckney, seemed to afford a proper opportunity for bringing these differences to a close, and for fixing the principles, which might serve as the basis of a definitive commercial arrangement between the two countries. Accordingly, soon after the arrival of the British minister, Mr. Jefferson called his attention to the seventh article of the treaty, which contained stipulations against carrying away negroes or destroying any American property, and secured the removal or evacuation by the British forces of all posts within the limits of the United States. To this letter Mr. Hammond promptly replied, that his government had only been induced to suspend the execution of that article, by the non-compliance of the United States with the engagements they had made, in the same treaty, to secure the payment of debts justly due to British creditors, and to stop all confiscations and prosecutions against British subjects. This was followed on both sides, by an exposition of the various circumstances relied on to support the grounds

that had been respectively assumed; and while on the one hand, the refusal to evacuate the military stations was acknowledged, it cannot on the other be denied, that the terms of the treaty did not appear, in several important instances, to have been strictly complied with. To account for this, Mr. Jefferson, on the twenty-second of May, addressed to Mr. Hammond a long and circumstantial letter. Placing out of view, all the acts which had occurred during the war, as recollections equally unprofitable and unconciliatory, and, to use his own language, dropping for ever the curtain on that tragedy, he proceeds to show, and with no little success, that the acts complained of by the British government, were no infraction of the treaty; that on the subject of exile and confiscation, congress only could and did stipulate, to recommend it to the individual states, and that the stipulation was so understood by both parties, nor was it indeed denied that the recommendation had been earnestly and faithfully made; that the British infractions had preceded, and thereby produced, the acts complained of, as obstacles to the recovery of the debts, thus justifying, on our part, a resort to retaliatory measures; but that even those acts, being the proceedings of individual states, were controlled by the treaty, and that anxious, not even to leave the shadow of doubt, they had already been repealed, in every state of the Union but one. That the claim set up by the British creditors for interest during the war, was not given by the treaty, was not generally allowed in other countries, and was fairly a subject that should be left to the decision of the legal tribunals, without imputing to them palpable wrong, or making it a pretence for not executing the treaty. "These things," concludes Mr. Jefferson, "being evident, I cannot but flatter myself, after the assu-

rances received from you of his Britannic Majesty's desire to remove every occasion of misunderstanding from between us, that an end will now be put to the disquieting situation of the two countries, by as complete execution of the treaty as circumstances render practicable at this late day. That it is to be done so late, has been the source of heavy losses of blood and treasure to the United States. Still our desire of friendly accommodation is, and has been constant. These difficulties being removed from between the two nations, I am persuaded the interests of both will be found in the strictest friendship. The considerations which lead to it, are too numerous and forcible to fail of their effect; and that they may be permitted to have their full effect, no one wishes more sincerely than myself." To this letter no reply was ever received; and although the subject was from time to time renewed, it seems to have been attended with no other result, than confirming each party in its original impressions. The whole controversy was finally merged in the more important differences which afterwards arose between the two countries, and was incorporated at length in the definitive negotiations which terminated in the treaty of 1794.

Nor was Great Britain the only country, with which the United States were, about this time, involved in a controversy of much delicacy and importance. As early as the revolutionary war, the Spanish government appears to have contemplated, with considerable apprehension, the probable future strength of the new republic, and to have strongly desired to restrain it, within the most confined limits, towards the south and west. After the conclusion of the war, attempts to form a treaty had been repeatedly made, but without any advance towards an agreement, on the point of differ-

ence between the two countries. These points were chiefly, the settlement of our boundaries, the exclusion of our citizens from navigating the Mississippi below our southern limits, the interference with the neighbouring Indian tribes, the restitution of property carried away, the surrender of fugitives from justice escaping within the territories of each other, and the arrangement of the general principles of a commercial treaty. About the close of the year 1791, however, Mr. Jefferson reported to the president, that the Spanish government, apprised of our solicitude to have some arrangement made, respecting the free navigation of the Mississippi, were ready to enter into a treaty on the subject at Madrid. This, it was true, referred merely to one of the matters then unsettled, but it was of too much importance to be neglected; and accordingly commissioners were appointed, without delay, to proceed to Spain, and their powers were extended to include the other arrangements, which it was desired should be made between the two countries. In the spring of 1792, Mr. Jefferson drew up his observations on the several subjects of negotiation, to be communicated by way of instruction to the two commissioners. As the negotiation itself, was one of the most difficult, intricate, and vexatious in which the government has ever been engaged, so are these documents among the most important and valuable, that have arisen out of our relations with foreign powers. In the first place, the absurdity of a claim set up by Spain to possessions within the state of Georgia, founded on her having rescued them by force from the British during the war, is clearly established; and it is shown, that the boundary between the possessions of the two countries, must rest as it had been fixed by former treaties. The next and most important subject, the navigation of the Mississippi, is treated more in de-

tail. Our right to use that river, from its source to where our southern boundary touched it, was not denied ; it was only from that point downward, that the exclusive navigation was claimed by Spain. Our right to participate in it, however, Mr. Jefferson contended, was established at once by former treaties, and by the law of nature and nations. By the treaty of 1763, the right of navigating the river in its whole length and breadth, from its source to sea, was expressly secured to all, at that time, the subjects of Great Britain. By the treaty of 1782, this common right was confirmed to the United States, by the only power who could pretend to claim against them, founded on the state of war. By the law of nature and nations, he remarks, if we appeal to it as we feel it written on the heart of man, what sentiment is written in deeper characters than that the ocean is free to all men, and their rivers to all their inhabitants? Is there a man, savage or civilized, unbiassed by habit, who does not feel and attest this truth? Accordingly, in all tracts of country united under the same political society, we find this natural right universally acknowledged and protected, by laying the navigable rivers open to all their inhabitants. When their rivers enter the limits of another society, if the right of the upper inhabitants to descend the stream is in any case obstructed, it is an act of force by a stronger society against a weaker, condemned by the judgment of mankind. If we appeal to the law of nature and nations, as expressed by writers on the subject, it is agreed by them, that were the river, where it passes between Florida and Louisiana, the exclusive right of Spain, still an innocent passage along it is a natural right in those inhabiting its borders above. It would indeed be what those writers call an imperfect right, because the modification of its exercise depends, in a con-

siderable degree, on the conveniency of the nation through which they are to pass. But it is still a right as real as any other right, however well defined; and were it to be refused, or to be so shackled by regulations not necessary for the peace or safety of its inhabitants, as to render its use impracticable to us, it would then be an injury, of which we should be entitled to demand redress. This right of navigation, therefore, as well as that of mooring vessels to its shores, of landing on them in case of distress, or for other necessary purposes, is established and supported, at considerable length, and with great learning and intelligence.

As the basis of a commercial treaty, Mr. Jefferson proposed to exchange, between the two countries, the rights of native citizens, or the privileges mutually granted to the most favoured nations. With respect to fugitives, he stated it as his opinion, that by the law of nature, no nation has a right to punish a person who has not offended itself; but that murder was a crime so atrocious and imminently dangerous to society, as to justify a denial of habitation, arrest, and delivery; carefully restraining it, however, to homicide of malice prepense, and not of the nature of treason. Treason, he observed, when real, merits the highest punishment. But most codes extend their definitions of treason to acts not really against one's country. They do not distinguish between acts against the government, and acts against the oppressions of the government. The latter are virtues, yet have furnished more victims to the executioner than the former: because real treasons are rare, oppressions frequent. The unsuccessful strugglers against tyranny, have been the chief martyrs of treason laws in all countries. We should not wish, therefore, to give up to the executioner the patriot who fails and flees to us; and treasons, on the whole, taking

the simulated with the real, are sufficiently punished by exile. Crimes against property, and flights from debts, are not of such a nature, as to authorize the delivery of the offender: they may be punished in the tribunals of the nation where he is found; and these tribunals, it ought to be stipulated, shall be open to the claimant from a neighbouring nation, in like manner as they are open to their own citizens.

On the remaining subject of controversy, the interference with the neighbouring Indians, such had been the perverse conduct of the Spanish government, that it became necessary to address them directly, in the most decided terms. "We love and we value peace," observes Mr. Jefferson; "we know its blessings from experience; unmeddling with the affairs of other nations, we had hoped that our distance and our dispositions, would have left us free, in the example and indulgence of peace with all the world. We had with sincere and particular dispositions, courted and cultivated the friendship of Spain. Cherishing the same sentiments, we have chosen to ascribe the unfriendly insinuations of the Spanish commissioners, in their intercourse with the government of the United States, to the peculiar character of the writers, and to remove the cause from them to their sovereign, in whose justice and love of peace we have confidence. If we are disappointed in this appeal, if we are to be forced into a contrary order of things, our mind is made up, we shall meet it with firmness. The necessity of our position will supersede all appeal to calculation now, as it has done heretofore. We confide in our own strength, without boasting of it: we respect that of others, without fearing it. If Spain chooses to consider our self-defence against savage butchery as a cause of war to her, we must meet her also in war, with regret but without fear; and we shall be hap-

pier, to the last moment, to repair with her to the tribunal of peace and reason."

The importance of these various objects of negotiation, will not be denied ; it appears to have been equally the interest of each nation, that they should at least be placed on some definite footing. The Spanish government, however, beheld with dread any measure which would extend the limits of the United States, or confirm to them privileges on the frontier, to which their claim was even doubtful. All the efforts of Mr. Jefferson were in vain ; the negotiation was protracted by artificial delays, and it was not until some years after, when embarrassed by an unsuccessful war, and perhaps conscious of her own increasing weakness, and the rising power of the republic, that Spain reluctantly consented to accede to a few of the propositions, which had been so often and so zealously urged by the United States. It finally remained, however, for the distinguished statesman who now presides over the republic, to complete, in our own day, with honour and success, the task which had been commenced so long before, by his illustrious predecessor.

In the spring of the year 1793, a negotiation was begun, arising out of circumstances, more directly affecting the present and future situation, and involving the political rights of the United States, than any that had occurred since the formation of the constitution. It was the question of her neutral policy and rights. Early in April, the declaration of war made by France against Great Britain and Holland, reached America. Scarcely was this event known, before indications were given in some of the seaports, of a disposition to engage in the unlawful business of privateering on the commerce of the belligerent powers. The subject was too interest-

ing and important, to be treated either with precipitation or neglect; and, on the nineteenth of April, the heads of department and the attorney general met at the president's house, to consult with him on the measures which the occasion demanded. Every feeling of sympathy, generosity, and gratitude was enlisted in the cause of France; she was boldly struggling against the leagued nations of Europe, for the preservation of her natural and domestic rights, from foreign aggression; she was endeavouring to obtain, for her own oppressed people, those liberties, laws, and institutions, which she had generously aided us in maintaining; and if, in the excess of popular frenzy, or under the instigation of ambitious and unprincipled leaders, the bounds of propriety, or of moral right, were sometimes past, it was to be attributed to long ages of ignorance and oppression, to the unrestrained exultation of a new and almost unexpected freedom, not held up as the justification of foreign invasion, or the excuse for illiberal conduct and violated treaties. Such feelings were alike honourable and correct; they were the general and spontaneous feelings of the American people. Yet it was the anxious desire of the administration, that even while this feeling was indulged, nothing should be done to destroy that relation to foreign powers, which was deemed most beneficial to our interests and happiness; that policy which has since been so emphatically confirmed, of preserving peace, commerce, and friendship with all nations, and forming entangling alliances with none. The president, therefore, submitted to his council a proclamation, forbidding the citizens of the United States to take part in any hostilities on the seas with, or against, any of the belligerent powers; warning them against carrying to any of those powers, articles deemed contraband according to the modern usages of nations,

and enjoining them from all acts inconsistent with the duties of a friendly nation towards those at war. The adoption of this proclamation was unanimously advised, and it was accordingly issued on the twenty-second of April.

The next point submitted by the president, was the propriety of receiving a minister from the French republic ; this he was advised to do with equal unanimity. But it was at the same time suggested, by some members of the administration, that from the turbulence and fury which had marked the late proceedings in France, from their doubts whether the present possessors had not obtained it by unjustifiable violence, and from the danger they apprehended to the United States, from too close a connexion with the new republic, it was expedient, while we gave its minister an unqualified reception, candidly to apprise him, that we should reserve for future discussion, the question, whether the operation of our treaties, ought not to be deemed temporarily or provisionally suspended. This extraordinary doctrine, not less needless than illiberal, was decidedly opposed by Mr. Jefferson, who at once expressed his opinion, that no cause existed for departing in the present instance from the usual mode of acting on such occasions. The revolution in France, he conceived, had produced no change in the relations between the two nations ; the obligations created by pre-existing treaties remained the same ; and there was nothing in the alteration of government, or in the character of the war, which could impair the right of France to demand, or weaken the duty of the United States faithfully to comply with the engagements which had been solemnly formed. In this opinion the president concurred ; and determined to receive the minister of the republic, without qualifying that act by any explanations.

The principles thus established, were called into immediate operation. The citizen Genet, a gentleman of considerable talents, but of a temper naturally ardent, and particularly excited by the passions and politics of the day, arrived just at this time in Charleston, as minister from France. He was welcomed by the people with unbounded, and not unnatural enthusiasm, as the first representative of a new republic, and the ambassador of an old and generous ally. From the publications of that period, his progress through the country seems rather to have been a triumphal procession, than the journey of an unknown stranger, and in the failure of his subsequent measures, he could look only to their impropriety and his own intemperance or imprudence. Either distrusting the concurrence of the American government, or too ardent to wait for it, in a few days after his landing in Charleston, he undertook to authorize the fitting and arming of vessels in that port, enlisting men, and giving commissions to cruise and commit hostilities on nations, with which the United States were at peace. These proceedings of course produced immediate complaints, and before the arrival of the ambassador at the seat of government, before he was accredited as a minister, a long catalogue of grievances committed by him, had been made to the president. Mr. Jefferson immediately addressed a letter to Mr. Ternan, the French minister, residing at Philadelphia. In it he candidly stated the determination of the government, and expressed his surprise at the assumption of jurisdiction by an officer of a foreign power, in cases which had not been permitted by the nation, within whose limits it had been exercised.

Mr. Genet arrived in Philadelphia on the following day, and from that period a correspondence commenced, which was continued without interruption as long as Mr. Jefferson

occupied the department of state. The letters of Mr. Jefferson take up, in succession, the different assertions which were made, and views which were entertained by the French ministry, answering and refuting them, always with success, and frequently with singular happiness and ingenuity. The language and conduct he had used in his intercourse with the American government, and the unwarrantable expressions in which he had indulged, when speaking of the illustrious man at its head, were treated with the indignation and contempt they merited. The spirit of friendship for the nation was carefully preserved, while the unauthorized aggressions of its agent were resisted, and his insinuations repelled and denied. This correspondence, indeed, forms one of the most important features in the history of the United States, as it is the foundation of a policy, which it has been the invariable aim of the government, since that period, to follow; and it contains nearly all the important principles, in the conduct of a neutral nation, which have since been more fully developed and supported.

Mr. Jefferson's participation in the government was now drawing to a close. As his last important official act, in pursuance of a resolution passed some time before, he presented to congress, on the sixteenth of December, 1793, a report on the nature and extent of the privileges and restrictions of the commercial intercourse of the United States with foreign nations, and the measures which he thought proper to be adopted for the improvement of their commerce and navigation.

In this report, which has been ever considered as one of great importance, he enumerates in the first place, the articles of export, with their value to the several nations with whom we have carried on a commercial intercourse. He then pro-

ceeds to point out minutely, the various restrictions which they have placed on that intercourse, and calls the attention of congress to the best modes of removing, modifying, or counteracting them. These he states to be twofold : first, by friendly arrangements with the several nations with whom these restrictions exist: or, secondly, by separate legislative acts for countervailing their effects.

He gave a decided preference to friendly arrangements. Instead of embarrassing commerce under piles of regulating laws, duties, and prohibitions, he thought it was desirable that it should be relieved from all its shackles in all parts of the world. If even a single nation would unite with the United States in this system of free commerce, he deemed it advisable to begin it with that nation ; while, with regard to such as supposed, contrary to the wishes of America, that it was more advantageous to continue a system of prohibitions, duties, and regulations, it would behove the United States to protect their citizens, their commerce, and navigation, by counter prohibitions, duties, and regulations also. These views are then pursued at considerable length, the protection of our navigation strenuously recommended, the principles of national reciprocity pointed out and enforced, and the necessity, or at least the propriety advocated, should these principles be neglected, of establishing regulations and prohibitions coextensive with those experienced by the United States, but finally indulging the hope that friendly arrangements may be made, equally beneficial to all commercial nations.

This report gave rise to one of the longest and most interesting discussions, which has ever agitated the national legislature. It was the foundation of a series of resolutions, proposed by Mr. Madison, sanctioning the views it embraced. These resolutions became the subject of ardent debate ; in

their consideration, many extrinsic questions of general politics were introduced; and the past and future policy of the country, the course to be adopted amid the conflicts of Europe, the aggressions on our commerce, the means and the necessity of retaliation, were all warmly discussed. It was ascertained that there was a majority in favour of their passage, but from reasons which were not fully explained, a determination upon them was never pressed. It appears, indeed, most likely, that their advocates found the majority evidently decreasing, under the influence of considerations made to bear against them; particularly the alarm of war, as likely to be the result of their adoption. A final rejection, therefore, being feared, it was, probably, thought best not to push them at that issue, which might strengthen the idea abroad, that no countervailing policy was to be apprehended, and weaken, at the same time, the republican party at home.

As this measure was the last official act of Mr. Jefferson, so it may be considered as that, which finally arrayed the statesmen of the nation under the banners of two great political parties, which have since existed, and placed him at the head of those, who, as advocates of the system he proposed, were for some years in a minority of the legislature. Connected with his previous acts, it also subjected him not only to personal reproach, but to many charges, as an unwise politician, whose plans were calculated to injure the commerce of his country, and involve it in a foreign war. To this, however, it might be properly replied, that it was but the continuation of a system adopted immediately after the close of the revolutionary war, and to enforce which, had been the prominent object of the convention that terminated in the formation of the federal constitution; that our own maritime rights and commercial prosperity could be main-

tained only by a proper discrimination in our intercourse with foreign nations ; and, that it was directed solely against those countries who refused to enter into treaties with us, and who, of course, could have no colour of complaint, after such refusal. In the measure itself, therefore, there was nothing opposed to the well settled policy of the United States, and still less, any thing which could afford even a plausible pretext for war. It was, indeed, notorious, that they who were in favour of it, could not be suspected of maintaining political principles less opposed to war than their opponents ; they were of the party which professed to adhere with most scruple, to the peculiar characteristics of a republican government, in defining the language, and settling the extent of the constitution, in adjusting public ceremonials, and in marking out the course of the administration ; and they had always resisted with the greatest zeal, every thing which tended to confer discretionary power in the executive departments, or to increase the public debts and taxes. To war, therefore, which was the readiest way to produce all these evils, they must have been averse ; and it was by means of the system they proposed, a system which aimed at the assertion and preservation of our rights by peaceful operations against the commerce and resources of those who unjustly infringed them, that they hoped to attain objects, which, however valuable, would have been dearly purchased at the risk of war.

It is not, however, our intention, as we have already avowed, to involve the reader in the party discussions of those times ; yet to him who is desirous of obtaining a clear and more extended view of the principles on which Mr. Jefferson and his friends acted, in bringing forward the system to which we have alluded, we cannot avoid mentioning the

“Political Observations” published at the time, and attributed to the pen of him who offered the resolutions in congress. They exhibit briefly, but with uncommon candour, clearness, and energy, the causes and principles on which they were founded, and the ends they had in view; and at the same time they present an able sketch of the immediate objects, with which the first idea of a federative government was adopted; the course pursued in its early administration; and the reasons that induced a large party to dissent from the measures of the existing government, stripped of the imputations, assigned by heat or malevolence at the time.

On the thirty-first of December, 1793, Mr. Jefferson resigned the office of secretary of state, and retired once more to private life. The sketch we have given of the duties he performed while he held it, will show with what advantage to his country he had assisted in the administration of its government; the firmness and dignity with which he had supported its rights, and vindicated its character towards foreign nations; and his zeal and industry in promoting its domestic interests. But the times had now become full of danger and uncertainty; at home the government, new alike in its principles and conduct, was assailed by unexpected and extraordinary difficulties, before its own organization was perfected, or it had received the benefit of experience; and abroad, an eventful struggle had arisen, which was overthrowing the strong holds of religious and political error, but unhappily carrying with them much that humanity lamented, and wisdom would have saved. At such a time, a wide scope for opinion was opened, in which the best and wisest might essentially differ, and Mr. Jefferson, as the reader will have already perceived, found himself a member of an adminis-

tration, where views different from his own appeared to predominate, while those which he entertained seemed to be approved of by a large proportion of his countrymen. In the diversity of sentiment which thus occurred, he viewed with dread every measure that he thought calculated to lessen the influence of the people at home; he looked, too, with exultation on the rising liberties of a nation, which had so recently assisted our struggles for freedom, and was now so deeply engaged in maintaining its own; and with avowed distrust on too close an alliance with a country, from which we had so lately separated ourselves. These feelings were perhaps to a considerable extent those of the people of the United States generally, but in the mode of acting upon them, there existed a great difference of sentiment among the political leaders.

At the present day, when the heat of prejudice and party has subsided, no one will attribute to those who thus differed from Mr. Jefferson, views which were intentionally inimical to the interests or prosperity of their country; but without so doing, it may be asserted that there were so many points of foreign and domestic policy, in which the opinion of his colleagues varied from his own, that retirement was the only course left for a statesman, who felt the value of his own principles, and wished to act with firmness and generosity. He carried with him into his seclusion, not only the kind feelings of the great man who had selected him for the post he had filled, but the warm attachment of a large proportion of his fellow citizens.

From this period, Mr. Jefferson devoted himself to the education of his family, the cultivation of his estate, and the pursuit of his philosophical studies, which he had so long abandoned, but to which he now returned, with new ardour.

Amid such employments there is little which a biographer can find to notice ; yet perhaps it will not be considered superfluous, to introduce the remarks which were made by a well known French traveller, who visited him at Monticello, about this time. "His conversation," says the Duke de Liancourt, "is of the most agreeable kind, and he possesses a stock of information not inferior to that of any other man. In Europe he would hold a distinguished rank among men of letters, and as such he has already appeared there. At present he is employed with activity and perseverance in the management of his farms and buildings, and he orders, directs, and pursues, in the minutest detail, every branch of business relating to them. The author of this sketch found him in the midst of harvest, from which the scorching heat of the sun does not prevent his attendance. His negroes are nourished, clothed, and treated as well as white servants could be. As he cannot expect any assistance from the two small neighbouring towns, every article is made on his farm: his negroes are cabinet makers, carpenters, masons, bricklayers, &c. The children he employs in a nail manufactory, which yields already a considerable profit. The young and old negresses spin for the clothing of the rest. He animates them by rewards and distinctions ; in fine, his superior mind directs the management of his domestic concerns with the same abilities, activity, and regularity, which he evinced in the conduct of public affairs, and which he is calculated to display in every situation of life."

The only incident relative to him, during this period, which we find recorded in the public documents of the day, was his unanimous election, as president of the American Philosophical Society, the oldest and most distinguished institution of the kind in the United States. The chair had

first been filled by the illustrious Franklin, the great and good patron of every thing, which tended to promote the learning, science, or happiness of his country; and by Rittenhouse, the most distinguished astronomer of the age. To be selected to succeed such men, on the very theatre of their reputation, and on principles which could not be influenced by the political feelings of the times, was an honour that no one could, or did, better appreciate than Mr. Jefferson. He was no inactive member; during the long period that he presided over the society, he promoted its views with the utmost zeal, occasionally contributed to its publications, and extended to it all the advantages which his public rank and private connexions, enabled him to afford.

The situation of the country did not, however, permit Mr. Jefferson long to enjoy the pleasures of a private life. General Washington had for some time contemplated a retirement from office, and in his farewell address to the people of the United States, he had, in the month of September, 1796, declined being considered any longer a candidate for it. The person in whom alone the voice of the whole nation could be united, having thus withdrawn, the two great parties respectively brought forward their chiefs. Mr. Jefferson was supported by the one, Mr. Adams by the other. In February, 1797, the votes for the first and second magistrates of the union were opened and counted in the presence of both houses; and the highest number appearing in favour of Mr. Adams, and the second in favour of Mr. Jefferson, the first was declared to be the president, and the second the vice president of the United States, for four years, to commence on the fourth day of the ensuing March. On that day, Mr. Jefferson also took the chair as president of the senate, and delivered to that body a short address, in which he expressed

his firm attachment to the laws and constitution of his country, and his anxious wish to fulfil, with correctness and satisfaction, the duties of the office to which he had been chosen.

During the four succeeding years, much of Mr. Jefferson's time was passed tranquilly at Monticello. From the nature of our constitution, there is little which can call the vice president into the prominent political duties of the government, unless he is required to fill the station of the chief magistrate. It is not, therefore, a matter of surprise, that during this period, we find but little notice of him among the public records of the day.

As, however, the time approached for a new election of a president, the republican party again selected Mr. Jefferson, as their candidate for the office, and with more success than on the preceding occasion. Yet an accident, arising from inattention to the constitution, went near to defeat the acknowledged wishes and intentions of the people, and to place in the executive chair, an individual to whom it was notorious no vote had been given for that station. The democratic party had elected Mr. Jefferson as president, and Mr. Burr as vice president of the United States, by an equal number of votes ; but, as the constitution required no specification of the respective office to which each was elected, they came before congress, neither having the majority required by law. Under these circumstances, the election devolved on the house of representatives, and the opponents of Mr. Jefferson, taking advantage of the occurrence, threw their votes into the scale of Mr. Burr. In the heat and violence of party, much may be excused, which calls down our severest animadversions in times of less excitement. Week after week, was the nation kept in suspense, while a contest was fiercely maintained,

by which it was attempted to raise to the highest office of the nation, a man who had not received a solitary vote from the people, in opposition to one, who for thirty years had been a distinguished member of their councils, who had held the highest offices of the government, who was fitted for the station alike by his experience, his services, and his virtues, and who, above all, was notoriously the choice of a majority of the nation. At length, after thirty-five ineffectual ballots, one of the representatives of the state of Maryland, made public the contents of a letter to himself, written by Mr. Burr, in which he declined all pretensions to the presidency; and authorized him to disclaim, in his name, any competition with Mr. Jefferson. On this specific declaration, on the part of Mr. Burr, two federal members, who represented the states which had heretofore voted blank, withdrew, and permitted the republican members from those states to become a majority; and, instead of putting a blank into the box, to vote positively for Mr. Jefferson. Consequently, on the thirty-sixth balloting, Mr. Jefferson was elected president. Colonel Burr became, of course, vice president.

On the fourth of March, 1801, Mr. Jefferson took the oath of office in the presence of both houses of congress, and delivered his inaugural address. He expressed in this, his sincere diffidence in his powers, properly to fulfil the task which his countrymen had assigned him; seeing, as he did, the honour, the happiness, and the hopes of his beloved country, committed to the issue and auspices of that day; and fully conscious of the magnitude of the undertaking, he indulged the hope, that as the contest of opinion had now been settled, by the rules of the constitution, all parties would unite, in common efforts for the common good; that harmony and affection, without which, liberty and even life itself are but

dreary things, might be restored to social intercourse; and that though called by different names, as all were in truth brethren of the same principle, the invidious distinctions of party might cease. He exhorted them, with courage and confidence, to pursue the principles of government they had adopted; a government which would restrain men from injuring one another, but leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and not take from the mouth of labour the bread it had earned. This, he said, was the sum of good government: and this necessary to close the circle of our felicities.

About to enter on the exercise of duties which comprehended every thing dear and valuable to his countrymen, he deemed it his duty, to state distinctly what he believed to be the essential principles by which his administration would be governed.—Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political:—peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none:—the support of the state governments in all their rights, as the most competent administration for our domestic concerns, and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies:—the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigour, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home, and safety abroad:—a jealous care of the right of election by the people, a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided:—absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of republics, from which is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism:—a well disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace, and for the first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them:—the supremacy of the

civil over the military authority:—economy in the public expense, that labour may be lightly burdened:—the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith:—encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid:—the diffusion of information, and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason:—freedom of religion; freedom of the press; and freedom of person, under the protection of the habeas corpus:—and trials by juries impartially selected. “These principles form the bright constellation, which has gone before us, and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. To the attainment of them,” he concludes, “have been devoted the wisdom of our sages and the blood of our heroes—they should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps, and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.”

It would not be consistent either with the character or length of this memoir, to enter into the details of the public measures of Mr. Jefferson while he occupied the presidential chair. His administration embraces a long and interesting period in the history of our country, distinguished by important measures, whose consequences have been felt in later periods, and which have led to results affecting, in no inconsiderable degree, the honour and prosperity of the nation. These are subjects which demand the research and deliberation of an acute historian; the present article aims to be nothing more than a cursory, though faithful biography.

In December, 1801, Mr. Jefferson sent his first message to both houses of the legislature. It had been the custom thus far, since the formation of the government, for the president to

deliver in person this communication to congress, and for that body to reply at once in a formal address. In the change now made by Mr. Jefferson, he appears to have had in view, at once, the convenience of the legislature, the economy of their time, their relief from the embarrassment of immediate answers on subjects not yet fully before them, and the benefits thence resulting to the public affairs. In these respects, its advantages have been so apparent, that it has been invariably adopted on every subsequent occasion.

In addition to these causes, there can be little doubt, however, that this was one of the modes adopted by Mr. Jefferson, to give a more popular feature to the administration. No one had had a better opportunity of perceiving the influence of forms, even trifling ones, in the affairs of government, or had entered more fully into the spirit of the age, for abolishing such as were useless. Indeed, in this respect, a wonderful revolution had taken place in the minds of all men, even in the short space that had occurred since the first organization of our government. At that time, from the force of ancient habits, it was scarcely possible to contemplate the administration of power, without those forms which were thought necessary to obtain for it a useful respect; and the first great chief of our country, had adopted such as united, according to the conceptions of his elevated mind, the dignity of power with republican simplicity. Many, however, can recollect with what rapidity, the whole train of ceremony and fashion in dress and manners was swept away; so that it was scarcely more than in accordance with the general feeling of the times, that Mr. Jefferson introduced this and other changes, which properly abolished all forms, beyond those of elevated private life, and that personal respect which will always be bestowed upon the man, whom

the choice of his country has pronounced; the first of its citizens.

In his message, Mr. Jefferson states, that the restoration of peace in Europe, had restored the friendly feelings of foreign nations, while it prevented any longer their violations of neutral rights. That our intercourse with the savage tribes on our own frontiers, was marked by a spirit of peace and friendship, advantageous and honourable at once to them and us. That with the African states, our affairs were in a situation less satisfactory, and such as demanded seriously the consideration, whether measures of offence should not be authorized. That at home our population was increasing in a very great ratio, our revenue so flourishing as to enable us to dispense with all internal taxation, the expenditures of the civil government reduced, a large portion of the public debt faithfully paid, and our agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and navigation, the four pillars of our prosperity, rapidly thriving. He recommends to their particular consideration, the disposal of the surplus in the military establishment, the general militia system, the increase of the navy, the expediency of erecting more fortifications of an expensive character, the judiciary system that had been lately established, and the extension of the laws relative to naturalization.

During the succeeding four years, the external policy of the country was pursued, so as to increase its prosperity and to secure its rights. The aggressions of the Tripolitans were gallantly and promptly chastized, and the attempts made by the agents of the Spanish government, to violate their treaties and deprive our citizens of the rights guaranteed to them, of navigating the Mississippi, were immediately noticed and repelled. The privileges, indeed, which had been

secured to the inhabitants of the western country, were of vital importance to its prosperity ; yet they had ever been the subject of jealousy and invasion. We have already seen, that during Mr. Jefferson's administration of the department of state, this was an object that engaged much of his attention. That attention he now renewed, and after considerable negotiation, it terminated in the purchase of Louisiana, one of the most important acquisitions ever made by the people of the United States. "Whilst the property and sovereignty of the Mississippi and its waters," to use Mr. Jefferson's own language, "secured an independent outlet for the produce of the western states, and an uncontrolled navigation through their whole course, free from collision with other powers, and the dangers to our peace from that source, the fertility of the country, its climate and extent, promise in due season important aids to our treasury, an ample provision for our posterity, and a wide spread for the blessings of freedom and equal laws." On the twentieth December, 1803, the territory was formally surrendered to the United States by the commissioner of France.

During the same interval, the internal policy of the United States, underwent several important changes, all calculated to develop the admirable and peculiar nature of our institutions, and to support and preserve the principles on which they are founded. Measures were adopted for the speedy discharge of the public debt, thus early establishing among all nations, the credit and integrity of the new government. The judicial system, founded by those who formed the constitution, had been hastily departed from during the preceding administration ; it was now restored on its original plan, which was deemed more consonant to our institutions, and is still retained as the best, after all the change of circumstances and

parties. A salutary reduction was introduced into the habitual expenditures of the government, by curtailing the charges that arose from our diplomatic intercourse with foreign nations, and unnecessary agencies at home. Offices created by the executive, and tending to increase its influence, were voluntarily suppressed. And the president presented the unusual, but noble spectacle of a chief magistrate relinquishing power and patronage, where he could do so, and where he could not, seeking the aid of the legislature for the same honourable purpose. "Should you think it expedient," he says, in a message to them, "to pass in review the roll of public offices, and to try all its parts by the test of public utility, you may be assured of every aid and light which executive information can yield. Considering the general tendency to multiply offices and dependencies, and to increase expense to the ultimate term of burthen which the citizen can bear, it behoves us to avail ourselves of every occasion which presents itself for taking off the surcharge; that it never may be seen here, that after leaving to labour the smallest portion of its earnings, on which it can subsist, government shall itself consume the residue of what it was instituted to guard. In our care, too, of the public contributions intrusted to our direction, it would be prudent to multiply barriers against their dissipation, by appropriating specific sums to every specific purpose susceptible of definition; by disallowing all applications of money varying from the appropriation in object, or transcending it in amount; by reducing the undefined field of contingencies, and thereby circumscribing discretionary powers over money; and by bringing back to a single department, all accountabilities for money, where the examination may be prompt, efficacious, and uniform."

Nor was it only by political measures that the internal prosperity of the country was consulted and promoted. It is a charming feature in the life of Mr. Jefferson, that, amid all the occupations and absorbing interest of his political career, he never forgot, or neglected the cause of philanthropy and science. Like lord Bacon, his ambition prompted him to aim at the loftiest honours which his country could bestow, but yet the attachment which he had early formed to pursuits, less splendid if not less useful, seems to have lingered around his mind, during the busiest moments of public occupation, and to have been renewed, with fresh delight, in the leisure of private life. The purchase of Louisiana, afforded an opportunity for accomplishing a plan he had long formed, for a minute and scientific examination of the immense territory of the west, which spreads from the Mississippi to the Pacific. This measure he proposed to congress; and on its receiving their sanction, he appointed for the purpose, captain Lewis and lieutenant Clarke, two intelligent officers in the army of the United States. He drew up for them himself, a set of instructions pointing out to their attention, the various objects towards which their investigations would be most advantageously directed; the geography, the natural history, the climate, the resources, and the peculiarities of the region through which they were to pass; the numbers and situation of the various Indian tribes; the establishment of commercial and friendly relations with them; and the best means for accomplishing the objects of the expedition. It was attended with all the success that could be desired. The party embarked at St. Louis, in May, 1804; ascended the Missouri three thousand miles to the falls; thence crossed the Rocky Mountains, covered with perpetual snow, and after descending for four hundred miles by various streams, they reached the

navigable waters of Columbia river; the course of this they followed for six hundred and forty miles, until they arrived at the Pacific Ocean. They reached St. Louis, on their return, in September, 1806, after an absence, from all civilization, of more than twenty-seven months. The journey from St. Louis, was above four thousand miles; in returning, thirty-five hundred; making, in the whole, seven thousand five hundred miles. The mass of information collected in the expedition, was valuable and extensive; it was equally advantageous to the scientific and political institutions of the country; and it led the way for similar expeditions, each of which has proved the skill with which it was arranged, and the benefits that have arisen from it.

So much were the measures adopted by Mr. Jefferson, during the four years for which he had been chosen, approved by his country, that, as the period approached for a new election, his popularity increased more and more, and he was elevated to the presidency a second time, by a majority which had risen from eight votes to one hundred and forty-eight. During the course indeed of his administration, the press, in its full licentiousness, had been directed against him, and, as he observed himself, the experiment had been fully made, whether freedom of discussion, unaided by power, was not sufficient for the propagation and protection of truth. It had been fairly proved, he said, that a government conducting itself in the true spirit of its constitution, with zeal and purity, and doing no act which it would be unwilling the world should witness, could not be written down by falsehood and defamation; but that the people, aware of the latent source from which these outrages proceeded, would gather around their public functionaries, and when the constitution called them to the decision by suffrage, they would pronounce

their verdict, honourable to those who had served them, and consolatory to the friend of man, who believes he may be intrusted with his own affairs.

He entered a second time on the duties of his lofty station, deeply feeling the proof of confidence which his fellow citizens had given him. He asserted his determination to act up to those principles, on which he believed it his duty to administer the affairs of the commonwealth, and which had been already sanctioned by the unequivocal approbation of his country. "I do not fear," he said, in concluding his inaugural address, "I do not fear that any motives of interest may lead me astray; I am sensible of no passion which could seduce me knowingly from the path of justice; but the weaknesses of human nature and the limits of my own understanding will produce errors of judgment sometimes injurious to your interests; I shall need, therefore, all the indulgence I have heretofore experienced—the want of it will certainly not lessen with increasing years. I shall need too the favour of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our forefathers, as Israel of old, from their native land, and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life; who has covered our infancy with his providence, and our riper years with his wisdom and power."

Mr. Jefferson had scarcely entered on his office, before his attention was called to an event obviously calculated to destroy the domestic tranquillity of the country, if not the constitution and union itself. This was no other than what has been termed the conspiracy of colonel Burr. We have already mentioned the unforeseen accident, which had nearly elevated this gentleman to the presidency. Since that time he had aimed at the office of governor of the state of New York, without success, and at a recent election, had been

succeeded by Mr. Clinton, as vice president of the United States. Of an ardent and ambitious spirit, these disappointments seem to have urged him to some desperate enterprise, not consonant to his general duties as a citizen, if not expressly contrary to the laws of his country. Assuming the unfriendly measures of the Spanish government, on the south western frontier, as the cause or pretext of his conduct; and holding out to the young and aspiring, the alluring idea of establishing in its provinces a new republic; he succeeded in drawing many of his countrymen into his schemes. That his real views, however, extended beyond this, has been generally presumed, though what they precisely were, has never been known. Many believed that the enterprise, which, it was ascertained, was to originate in the western country, had for its object the separation of the states beyond the Alleghany Mountains, from their political connexion with those on the Atlantic border; and by uniting them with the territories on the western bank of the Mississippi, the formation of a distinct and independent empire. Whatever may have been the ultimate object of his plans, as soon as Mr. Jefferson received information that a number of private individuals were combining together, arming and organizing themselves contrary to law, with the avowed object of carrying on some military expedition against the territories of Spain; he took measures without delay, by proclamation as well as by special orders, to prevent and suppress the enterprise, to seize the vessels, arms, and other means provided for it, and to arrest and bring to justice its authors and abettors. His scheme being thus discovered and defeated, colonel Burr fled; but was eventually apprehended on the Tombigbee, and escorted as a prisoner of state, under the guard of a military officer, to Richmond in Virginia. On his arrival

in that city, he was delivered over to the civil authority, by virtue of a warrant from the chief justice of the United States, grounded on charges of a high misdemeanor, in preparing and setting on foot, within their territories, a military expedition, to be carried thence, against the dominions of the king of Spain, with whom we were at peace; and also, of treason against the United States. At the close of a long examination of witnesses, he was bound over to take his trial on the first charge, the chief justice not deeming the evidence of an overt act of treason, sufficient to justify a commitment on the latter. On the seventeenth of August, 1807, he was brought to trial. Several days were consumed in the examination of witnesses, and in the discussion of the law of treason, as it arose out of the constitution. The assemblage of the individuals was proved; but the evidence was not legally sufficient to establish the presence of colonel Burr, or the use of any force against the authority of the United States. The consequence was the acquittal of the prisoners. On the meeting of congress, a few months after, Mr. Jefferson laid before them the proceedings and evidence which had been exhibited at the trial. From these, he stated to them, they would be enabled to judge whether the defect was in the testimony, in the law, or in the administration of the law, and wherever it should be found, the legislature alone could apply or originate the remedy. The framers of our constitution certainly supposed they had guarded, as well their government against destruction by treason, as their citizens against oppression, under pretence of it, and if these ends were not attained, it was of importance to inquire by what means more effectual they might be secured.

The foreign relations of the country, however, at this period, involved questions of infinitely greater importance, than any which arose from its domestic troubles. Nearly the whole revenue of the United States then depended on its external commerce; the situation of the world rendered that commerce as lucrative as it was extensive; and every act which affected its prosperity, was a vital injury to the welfare of the country.

It would at this moment be more than useless, to enter into the numerous aggressions which had been committed on the rights, character, and commerce of the United States, both by Great Britain and France, from the commencement of the war between them in 1793, or to rake from their ashes, the innumerable facts, and still more innumerable controversies, to which they gave rise, not only between those nations and the United States, but among the citizens of the last, according to the light in which they viewed the conduct of the two great parties. It is sufficient to recollect, that from the commencement of the war, both the great belligerent powers seemed to view the United States as a country, to which that course of conduct was to be dictated as neutral, which was congenial to their own views or interests, and each assumed the right to punish in the neutral, what it chose to consider as favour to its enemy. In fact, each presuming on the weakness of the United States to defend its property on the seas, had inflicted upon them the most severe and unprincipled aggressions. Which nation exceeded the other in violence of conduct or in want of principle, although a great party question at the time, it is now perhaps unnecessary to inquire; in the early part of the war, when both were powerful on the ocean, both had resort to open and avowed national acts, which, followed up by the spirit of plunder in their navies,

and the insatiable thirst for privateering, had at times nearly swept the American commerce from the ocean ; and this was accompanied by innumerable seizures under the most aggravating circumstances. All these, however, had been parried by the government of the United States, partly from a sense of the deplorable consequences, which, in its infant establishment, must have attended a war with either of the belligerents, and partly from the great advantages that attended its neutral situation and extensive commerce, even under all the injuries it sustained. The period that had elapsed, therefore, from the beginning of the war between Great Britain and France, to the presidency of Mr. Jefferson, had been consumed in a series of remonstrances and negotiations between the United States and the belligerents, which in no inconsiderable degree raised the character of the former, though they did not settle the great principles on which their neutrality and commerce were to be regulated and respected.

The object and scene of conflict, however, had now materially changed. France and the nations who took part with her, had by this time lost their colonies, and been swept from the seas, of which Great Britain remained the powerful mistress ; while, on the other hand, she had been driven from the continent by the ascendancy of France. In this situation, with the predominance of one by land and of the other on the ocean, the points of contact remained but few, while the animosity of each, attempted to wound the other in every assailable point ; England by subsidizing the powers of the continent, and France by a war of extermination against British commerce.

This contest produced, as is well known, a new scene of boundless depredation, under a new series of hostile recriminating acts, of which, whatever was the effect upon the par-

ties themselves, the destruction of all neutral commerce was the obvious consequence. To neutral nations, therefore, and to the United States, as almost the only one in existence, this great principle became established, that as both the belligerents had violated every principle of justice, the causes of war against both were numerous and obvious, and the choice was left to the neutral to begin it with both or either, according to its own interest, leaving that party to complain of partiality or injustice, which should first act justly itself.

In this situation, all those nice calculations which might otherwise have been made, and which prevailed largely at the time, as to the equality of conduct to be maintained towards the belligerent powers, became in a great degree lost, and it is obvious, a nice balance on the subject could not be pursued. If the violence of the hostile decrees was to be judged by their temper and spirit, both were excessively injurious. But a great difference existed in the power to execute them; the acts of France, however severely carried into effect, within the limits it could command, were confined in their operation, while the scope for injury by Great Britain was boundless; and, of course, it was with her during all the war, but particularly the latter stage of it, that collisions became more frequent, and the measures of the United States more prominent, so much so, that this very circumstance gave a tinge to the character of the transactions themselves.

It is certain, however, that there were some circumstances which, independent of the serious injury common to both the belligerents, were peculiar to the situation of the United States and Great Britain with each other, particularly the right of searching neutral ships for enemy's goods, the revival of what was called the rule of war of 1756, prohibiting neutrals from trade which they had not enjoyed in time of

peace, and the search for, and impressment of English subjects and seamen. The first of these had been conceded by the United States, in their first treaty with England, and again in Mr. Jay's treaty, while it had not been admitted in the treaties with France; the second had been in some degree modified in the negotiations with England; but the third was a measure so important to both parties, upon principles so directly opposite to each other, as to constitute in itself alone a cause of disquietude, the most aggravating of all others. Bitterly, indeed, did it come home to the feelings of the people of the United States, that their vessels should be searched on the seas to determine the character of their citizens, that such determination should be left to ignorant or unprincipled officers, and those citizens themselves taken by force to fight the battles of other nations, beyond the protection of their own government and laws, deprived of their natural rights and the inherent liberty of their country.

All these had for a long time previous, been the subjects of continual but unavailing negotiation, in common with the general causes of complaint against both nations, and had produced some hostilities, particularly those with France, during Mr. Adams's administration. Upon the accession of Mr. Jefferson, however, the foreign relations of the United States reposed upon the recent peace with France in 1800, and Mr. Jay's treaty with England, and these were soon followed by the general peace of Amiens, when our government had only to prosecute its demands for the injuries and spoliations its citizens had sustained. Of these, a part of what was claimed from France, was obtained by the purchase of Louisiana, and the rest, with the claims on England and

other countries, remained in common, with all other sources of complaint, the subject of negotiation.

Upon the rupture of the peace of Amiens, the ships of the United States became again the carriers of the world, and its commerce as unbounded as before. In this situation, it was in the highest degree the interest, as it was before the desire of the people, to pursue a course of rigid neutrality, and Mr. Jefferson declared it their policy to cultivate the friendship of the belligerent nations, by every act of justice and innocent kindness ; to receive their armed vessels with hospitality from the distresses of the sea, but to administer the means of annoyance to none ; to establish in our harbours such a police as might maintain law and order ; to restrain our citizens from embarking individually in a war in which their country took no part ; to punish severely those persons, citizen or alien, who should usurp the cover of our flag for vessels not entitled to it, infecting thereby with suspicion those of real Americans, and involving us in controversies for the redress of wrongs not our own ; to exact from every nation the observance, towards our vessels and citizens, of those principles and practices which all civilized people acknowledge ; to merit the character of a just nation, and maintain that of an independent one, preferring every consequence to insult and habitual wrong.

The justice of these principles was not, as it could not be denied ; but the practice of them was soon put to a severe trial, by the aggressions of the belligerent powers, which seemed to increase with their vindictiveness against each other, and the prosperous commerce and situation of the United States. The attacks and depredations renewed against their colonial trade, as a war in disguise, by the impressment of their seamen, by robberies on their coasts and

harbours, and by the revival of all the hostile forms in which they had been harassed before, became so numerous and galling during the years 1804 and 1805, as to induce Mr. Jefferson to resort in some instances to force, to repel them. In December of the latter year, seconded by numerous remonstrances from the people, he called the attention of congress pointedly to the subject. "Our coasts," he remarks, "have been infested, and our harbours watched, by private armed vessels, some of them without commissions, some with illegal commissions, others with those of legal form, but committing piratical acts beyond the authority of their commissions. They have captured in the very entrance of our harbours, as well as on the high seas, not only the vessels of our friends, coming to trade with us, but our own also. They have carried them off under pretence of legal adjudication, but, not daring to approach a court of justice, they have plundered and sunk them by the way, or in obscure places, where no evidence could arise against them, maltreated the crews, and abandoned them in boats, in the open sea, or on desert shores, without food or covering.

"The same system of hovering on our coasts and harbours, under colour of seeking enemies, has been also carried on by public armed ships, to the great annoyance and oppression of our commerce. New principles too have been interpolated into the law of nations, founded neither in justice, nor the usage or acknowledgment of nations. According to these, a belligerent takes to itself a commerce with its own enemy, which it denies to a neutral, on the ground of its aiding that enemy in the war. But reason revolts at such an inconsistency; and the neutral having equal right with the belligerent to decide the question, the interests of our constituents, and the duty of maintaining the authority of

reason, the only umpire between just nations, impose on us the obligation of providing an effectual and determined opposition to a doctrine, so injurious to the rights of peaceable nations.”

It was from these causes that a line of policy was adopted, which, though it had been in some degree that of his predecessors, and particularly of general Washington, may be considered, in the manner it was now exercised, as a distinguished feature of Mr. Jefferson’s administration. It was to prepare the country for domestic defence, but to do so rather by shutting it up from foreign intercourse, than by exposing it to war; and in the mean time to try the full effect of negotiation, and to exercise yet a little longer forbearance under our numerous injuries. Accordingly, the measures adopted by the government in the early part of 1806, were those for the defence of the ports and coasts, and of the country itself in case of need, the act called the non-importation act, and the appointment of commissioners to negotiate abroad, particularly of Mr. Pinckney, who was united with Mr. Monroe, the then resident minister in London.

It does not appear that any of the measures thus adopted, gave umbrage abroad; on the contrary, Mr. Pinckney, writing on the spot soon after his arrival, with a full knowledge of the temper of the government, and its effect upon England, pronounced the non-importation act a wise and salutary measure. His negotiations, indeed, though rendered unavoidably slow, were proceeding with prospects somewhat more favourable, when Bonaparte, stimulated as it should seem by the unlimited power of Great Britain on the seas, and the boundless depredations she committed in consequence of it, and perhaps by a jealousy of the negotiations pending in England, issued his decree of the twenty-first of November from Berlin.

This, however, did not prevent the continuance of the negotiation, and the completion of a treaty in December, though it was accompanied by a declaration, that it should not preclude a right of retaliation ; on the contrary, that right was almost immediately exercised by the British orders in council of January, 1807.

As the treaty with England contained little or no remedy for former injuries, and no sufficient stipulation against their renewal, added to the new causes which the hostile decrees had elicited, it was not confirmed by Mr. Jefferson ; but still anxious for the line of policy he had adopted, and not to close the door against friendly adjustment, the commissioners were directed to resume their negotiations, with some further concessions on the part of the United States, and equal steps were pursued for accommodations with France.

While reposing, however, with confidence on this new reference to amicable discussion, an act was committed, which aroused the outraged feelings of the whole nation. On the twenty-second of June, 1807, by a formal order from a British admiral, the frigate Chesapeake, leaving her port for a distant service, was attacked by one of those vessels which had been lying in our harbours under the indulgences of hospitality, was disabled from proceeding, and had several of her crew killed, and four taken away. On this outrage, no commentaries are necessary. Its character has been pronounced by the indignant voice of our citizens, with an emphasis and unanimity never exceeded. A proclamation was immediately issued by Mr. Jefferson, requiring all British vessels bearing the royal commission to depart, and forbidding all to enter the waters of the United States. Satisfaction and security for the outrage were promptly demanded ; an armed vessel of the United States was sent directly to London, with in-

structions to our ministers on the subject; and congress did not hesitate to declare it a flagrant violation of our jurisdiction, of which a parallel was scarcely to be found in the history of civilized nations, and which, if not disavowed, was just cause of instant and severe retaliation.

The British government immediately disavowed the act of the officer by whom it had been committed, and voluntarily made an offer of reparation, which was afterwards carried into effect. Scarcely, however, was this one act of injustice and aggression atoned for, when it was followed by another. In November of the same year, 1807, orders were issued by the king in council, wherein he prohibited all commerce between America and the ports of his enemies in Europe, unless the articles had been first landed in England, and duties paid for their re-exportation; and declared that a certificate from a French consul, of the origin of articles, should render the vessel in which they were, liable to condemnation. The ground on which it was attempted to justify these measures, was a retaliation for the course adopted by the French government relative to neutral commerce; a pretext alike frivolous and unfounded. It was not denied that France had pursued a course quite unjustifiable; but yet, even supposing what has been uniformly denied, that the measures against America were first adopted by that nation, it is hard to imagine by what process of reasoning those measures could justify an attack on the acknowledged rights of a nation, that was no partner in their adoption, and to whose interests they were vitally inimical.

As appeal to justice and national law was thus made in vain, America had now no alternative left, but abject submission or decided retaliation. Yet it was difficult to know by what means this retaliation could be effected. Two only sug-

gested themselves, a declaration of war, or a suspension of commerce on the part of the United States. The unsettled state of the world at that period, the peculiar and extraordinary situation in which this country was placed, the necessity, if hostilities were resorted to, of making it at the same time against the two most powerful nations of the world, the peaceful habits, the limited resources, and the uncertain issue, were all just causes of hesitation in choosing the more decided alternative; and although there could be no doubt that its adoption would injure, if it did not destroy an extensive and valuable commerce, yet that commerce would almost equally suffer from the ravages of unavenged and unnoticed aggression. Under these circumstances, on the eighteenth December, 1807, Mr. Jefferson recommended to congress an inhibition of the departure of our vessels from the ports of the United States, and on the twenty-second of the same month an act was passed by them, laying a general embargo.

This measure, the most prominent feature in the administration of Mr. Jefferson, was not adopted, as may well be supposed, without much opposition from those whose views of policy were different from his own; yet at this period, when much of the violence of party has subsided, and subsequent events have shown the effect of such a measure, it seems difficult to imagine what better course could have been pursued, in the situation of the country at that period. Surely a tame submission was not to be thought of, but even if it had been, to the total sacrifice of our national honour, yet in no point of view could it have saved the suffering commerce of the nation. The experiment of negotiation had been made year after year without success; private and public rights had been infringed with impunity; and Ame-

rica must have consented to become the willing and unresisting victim of commercial despotism, to be despised and trampled on in future, whenever Europe should choose to pursue her schemes of commercial aggrandizement. With most nations, and under ordinary circumstances, the appeal to war would have been as prompt as the injury was unjustifiable; but the government, interests, and situation of America required the exertion and failure of every other alternative, before that was resorted to. Under these circumstances, the embargo presented itself as a measure of retaliation, if not decisive at least preparatory. It could only be injurious to the commercial interests of the nation, already in a situation scarcely capable of greater injury. It left open equally the means of farther negotiation and the power of resorting to war, while it showed to foreign nations the decided spirit which animated our councils, and inflicted no inconsiderable blow on their interests.

On these grounds it was recommended by Mr. Jefferson, and certainly promised at least temporary success. The interesting letters which have lately been given to the world, in the biography of one of our most distinguished citizens, then ambassador in London, seem to place this circumstance beyond question. Very shortly after its establishment, in writing from England, he observes, "It is apparent that we gain ground here. The tone is altered. The embargo has done much, although its motives are variously understood. Some view it with doubt and suspicion. The government appears to put a favourable construction upon it; and all agree that it is highly honourable to the sagacity and firmness of our councils. Events which you could only conjecture when the measure was adopted, have already made out its justification beyond the reach of cavil." "To repeal the

embargo," he observes, in a subsequent letter, " would be so fatal to us in all respects, that we should long feel the wound it would inflict, unless indeed some other expedient, as strong at least, and as efficacious in all its bearings, can (as I fear it cannot) be substituted in its place. On the other hand," he adds, " if we persevere, we must gain our purpose at last. By complying with the little policy of the moment, we shall be lost. By a great and systematic adherence to principle, we shall find the end to our difficulties. The embargo and the loss of our trade are deeply felt here, and will be felt with more severity every day. The wheat harvest is like to be alarmingly short, and the state of the continent will augment the evil. The discontents among the manufacturers are only quieted for the moment by temporary causes. Cotton is rising, and soon will be scarce. Unfavourable events on the continent will subdue the temper unfriendly to wisdom and justice, which now prevails here. But above all, the world will, I trust, be convinced that our firmness is not to be shaken. Our measures have not been without effect. They have not been decisive, because we have not been thought capable of persevering in self-denial, if that can be called self-denial, which is no more than prudent abstinence from destruction and dishonour."

Mr. Jefferson was so far destined, ere his retirement, to behold the success of his plans, that in January, 1809, after the embargo had existed a year, overtures were made by Mr. Canning to Mr. Pinckney, which indicated a disposition on the part of the British government, to recede from the ground they had taken. These overtures were succeeded by negotiations, which at last terminated in the repeal of some of the most objectionable features of the orders in council. On this event Mr. Pinckney remarks—" Our triumph

is already considered as a signal one by every body. The pretexts with which ministers would conceal their motives for a relinquishment of all which they prized in their system, are seen through; and it is universally viewed as a concession to America. Our honour is now safe, and by management we may probably gain every thing we have in view."

To trace out, however, the results to which Mr. Jefferson's policy led, not only in these but in other circumstances; and especially to pursue the history of our various negotiations and differences with Great Britain, arising from it, and ultimately resulting in a conflict honourable and advantageous to the United States, is reserved, not for the present biographer, but for him who shall record the life of the amiable and patriotic statesman by whom he was shortly succeeded. To him, as he had been his early pupil, and afterwards his personal friend and political supporter, was left the task of bringing to a termination that series of political measures, in the midst of which the retirement of Mr. Jefferson from public life, obliges us abruptly to break off.

The period had now arrived, when he was desirous to close for ever his political career; he had reached the age of sixty-five years; he had been engaged almost without interruption for forty years in the most arduous duties of public life; and had passed through the various stations, to which his country had called him, with unsullied honour and distinguished reputation; he now, therefore, determined to leave the scene of his glory, while its brightness was unobscured by the unavoidable infirmities of age; and to spend the evening of his days in the calmness of domestic and philosophical retirement. In his message to congress he alluded to this determination, and took leave of them in the following language.

"Availing myself of this, the last occasion which will occur

of addressing the two Houses of the legislature at their meeting, I cannot omit the expression of my sincere gratitude, for the repeated proofs of confidence manifested to me by themselves and their predecessors, since my call to the administration, and the many indulgences experienced at their hands. The same grateful acknowledgments are due to my fellow citizens generally, whose support has been my great encouragement under all embarrassments. In the transaction of their business, I cannot have escaped error. It is incident to our imperfect nature. But I may say with truth, my errors have been of the understanding, not of intention; and that the advancement of their rights and interests has been the constant motive of every measure. On these considerations I solicit their indulgence. Looking forward with anxiety to their future destinies, I trust, that in their steady character, unshaken by difficulties, in their love of liberty, obedience to law, and support of public authorities, I see a sure guarantee of the permanence of our republic; and retiring from the charge of their affairs, I carry with me the consolation of a firm persuasion, that Heaven has in store for our beloved country, long ages to come of prosperity and happiness."

From this period, with the exception of excursions which business required, Mr. Jefferson resided altogether at Monticello. Into the retirement of his domestic life, we have not, unfortunately, the means of penetrating. It is reserved for some other pen—and we indulge the hope that it may have been his own—to portray the pursuits, the studies, and the thoughts which engaged his active and intelligent mind, during the long period that passed away, after he withdrew from public life. He indeed appeared occasionally before his countrymen, by publications of his private

correspondence, which proved the same purity of intention, the same earnest zeal in the promotion of liberal opinions, and the same intelligence, forethought, and firmness which distinguished the actions of his earlier life. He was called forward from time to time, by the repeated anxiety of his countrymen to connect him with the rising institutions, which have been formed to promote science, taste, and literature. And above all, he was sought out in his retirement by strangers from every foreign nation, who had heard of and admired him; and by the natives of every corner of his own country, who looked upon him as their guide, philosopher, and friend. His home was accordingly the abode of hospitality, and the seat of dignified retirement; and while he thus forgot the busy times of his political existence, in the more calm and congenial pleasures of learning and science, Monticello might remind us of the scene where the Roman sage, deserting the forum and the senate, discoursed beneath his spreading plane tree, on the rights and duties of man—*rura nemusque sacrum dilectaque jugera musis*.

It was not, however, to his private cares, and enjoyments alone, that these years of retirement were devoted by Mr. Jefferson. They were largely shared by the public interests of science and letters, particularly in the improvement of education in his native state, and the establishment of a noble university, which was commenced by his own private donations, and those he could obtain from his friends, and on which, even after it became a national object, he bestowed the greatest zeal and labour during the remainder of his life. Soon after his return to Monticello, when the formation of a college in his neighbourhood was proposed, he addressed a letter to the trustees, in which he sketched a plan for the establishment of a general system of education in Virginia.

This appears to have led the way to an act of the legislature in the year 1818, by which commissioners were appointed, with authority to select a site and form a plan for a university, on a scale of great magnificence. Of these commissioners, Mr. Jefferson was unanimously chosen the chairman, and on the fourth of August, 1818, he framed a report embracing the principles on which it was proposed the institution should be formed. The situation selected for it was at Charlottesville, a town at the foot of the mountain on which Mr. Jefferson resided. The plan was such as to combine elegance and utility with the power of enlarging it to any extent, which its future prosperity may require. The instruction extended to the various branches of learning, which a citizen will require in his intercourse between man and man, in the improvement of his morals and faculties, and in the knowledge and exercise of his social rights. Such an education, Mr. Jefferson observes, “generates habits of application and the love of virtue ; and controls, by the force of habit, any innate obliquities in our moral organization. We should be far too from discouraging persuasion, that man is fixed, by the law of his nature, at a given point ; that his improvement is a chimæra, and the hope delusive of rendering ourselves wiser, happier, or better than our forefathers were. We need look back only half a century, to times which many now living remember well, and see the wonderful advances in the sciences and arts which have been made within that period. Some of these have rendered the elements themselves subservient to the purposes of man, have harnessed them to the yoke of his labours, and effected the great blessings of moderating his own, of accomplishing what was beyond his feeble force, and of extending the comforts of life to a much enlarged circle, to those who had be-

fore known its necessities only. That these are not the vain dreams of sanguine hope, we have before our eyes real and living examples. What, but education, has advanced us beyond the condition of our indigenious neighbours? and what chains them to their present state of barbarism and wretchedness, but a bigoted veneration for the supposed superlative wisdom of their fathers, and the preposterous idea that they are to look backward for better things and not forward, longing, as it should seem, to return to the days of eating acorns and roots, rather than indulge in the degeneracies of civilization? And how much more encouraging to the achievements of science and improvement is this, than the desponding view that the condition of man cannot be ameliorated, that what has been must ever be, and that to secure ourselves where we are, we must tread, with awful reverence, in the footsteps of our fathers. This doctrine is the genuine fruit of the alliance between church and state, the tenants of which, finding themselves but too well in their present position, oppose all advances which might unmask their usurpations, and monopolies of honours, wealth, and power, and fear every change, as endangering the comforts they now hold." The report then proceeds to state the various arrangements which should be adopted, for the conduct of so extensive an institution; and concludes with a statement of its financial situation. The plan thus proposed was adopted by the legislature. Mr. Jefferson was elected the rector of the new institution, and from that period he devoted himself with unceasing ardour to carry it into effect. Nothing indeed could exceed his fond desire for its success. It appeared to be the object of all his hopes and thoughts in the declining years of his life. He rode every morning when the weather would permit, to inspect its progress; he prepared with

his own hands, the drawings and plans for the workmen ; he stood over them as they proceeded with a sort of parental care and anxiety ; and when the inclemency of the season or the infirmity of age prevented his visits, a telescope was placed on a terrace near his house, by means of which he could inspect the progress of the work. After its completion, he might often be seen pacing slowly along the porticoes or cloisters which extend in front of the dormitories of the students, occasionally conversing with them, and viewing the establishment with a natural and honourable pride. In the library is carefully preserved the catalogue written by himself, in which he has collected the names, best editions, and value of all works of whatever language, in literature and science, which he thought necessary to form a complete library, and in examining it one is really less struck with the research and various knowledge required for its compilation, than the additional proof of that anxious care, which seemed to search out all the means of fostering and improving the institution he had formed.

It is painful to turn from this pleasing picture, to the scenes of worldly suffering, from which no human lot is entirely exempt. Although the virtues and fame of Mr. Jefferson shed a bright lustre around the evening of his days, it was destined to be obscured by an incident which, however desirous we might be to pass over, must not remain unnoticed in the history of his life. In every age and country it has been too often the lot of those who have devoted, with thoughtless generosity, to the service of their fellow creatures, the zeal of youth and the experience of maturer years, to find themselves at last in their old age, doomed to poverty which they have no longer the ability to repel. An honourable poverty, incurred in the performance of public duties, or private gene-

rosity, unsullied by extravagance, and unattended by crime, will redound to the honour, never to the disgrace of him who has the misfortune to endure it. With Mr. Jefferson it is difficult to imagine how it could have been avoided. For more than fifty years he had been actively engaged in public office, generally at a distance from his own estate; and though his patrimony was originally large, it could not but be impaired by this unavoidable neglect. In retiring from the exalted station he had enjoyed, he did not enter on a less conspicuous scene; he had become identified as it were with the greatness and glory of his country, he was the object of attraction to crowds of anxious and admiring guests, and unless by coldly closing his doors, it was impossible to limit the expenses he was thus obliged to incur.

To relieve him from the embarrassment in which he was thus involved, an act of the legislature of Virginia was passed in the spring of 1826, by which he was authorized to dispose of his estates by lottery, in order that a fair price for them might be obtained. Whether this tardy measure was becoming to the character of a high minded state; whether such was the manner in which she should have relieved the wants of a citizen, to whom it is acknowledged she was mainly indebted for what is most valuable in her government, her laws, and her institutions, and who had equally devoted to her, his youth, his manhood, and his hoary age—it is not for us to determine.

But few more incidents remain to be told of the eventful life of this great man. The full vigour of his mind, indeed, remained unimpaired, at least until a very short period before he fell into the grave. The year 1826 being the fiftieth since the establishment of our independence, it was determined universally throughout the United States, to celebrate it as a

jubilee with unusual rejoicing ; preparations to this end were made in every part of the country ; and all means were taken to impart to the celebration, the dignity which was worthy of the country and the event. The citizens of Washington, the metropolis of the nation, among other things invited Mr. Jefferson, as one of the surviving signers of the Declaration of Independence, to unite with them in their festivities ; this request he was obliged to decline ; but the letter in which he signified his regret, is left to us as a monument of his expiring greatness. On the twenty-fourth of June, when the hand of death was already upon him, he expressed in this letter all those characteristic sentiments which through life had so strongly marked him—the delight with which he looked back to the period, when his country had made its glorious election between submission and the sword—the joy he felt in its consequent prosperity—the hope he indulged, that the time would yet come when civil and religious freedom should bless all the world—his ardent wish, that the return of that day should keep fresh in us the recollection of our rights, and increase our devotion to them, and the affectionate remembrance with which he dwelt on the kindness he had experienced from his fellow citizens. He thus addresses the mayor of Washington—“Respected Sir : The kind invitation I received from you, on the part of the citizens of the city of Washington, to be present with them at their celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of American independence, as one of the surviving signers of an instrument, pregnant with our own, and the fate of the world, is most flattering to myself, and heightened by the honourable accompaniment proposed for the comfort of such a journey. It adds sensibly to the sufferings of sickness, to be deprived by it of a personal participation in the rejoicings of that day ; but

acquiescence under circumstances is a duty not placed among those we are permitted to control. I should, indeed, with peculiar delight, have met and exchanged there, congratulations, personally, with the small band, the remnant of the host of worthies who joined with us, on that day, in the bold and doubtful election we were to make for our country, between submission and the sword; and to have enjoyed with them the consolatory fact that our fellow citizens, after half a century of experience and prosperity, continue to approve the choice we made. May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains, under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. The form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the lights of science, has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favoured few, booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others; for ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them. I will ask permission here, to express the pleasure with which I should have met my ancient neighbours of the city of Washington and its vicinities, with whom I passed so many years of a pleasing social intercourse—an intercourse which so much relieved the anxieties of the public cares, and left impressions so deeply engraved in my affections, as never to be

forgotten. With my regret that ill health forbids me the gratification of an acceptance, be pleased to receive for yourself, and those for whom you write, the assurance of my highest respect and friendly attachments."

Soon after this letter was written, the indisposition of Mr. Jefferson assumed a more serious character. He had been for some time ill, though it was not until the twenty-sixth of June that he was obliged to confine himself to his bed. The strength of his constitution, and freedom from bodily pain, for a short time encouraged the hope that his illness was merely temporary. He himself, however, felt the conviction that his last hour was approaching. He had already lived beyond the limits ordinarily assigned to human existence, and for some months past, the whole tone of his conversation showed that he was looking forward to its termination, with a calmness and equanimity worthy of his past life. "I do not wish to die," he was in the habit of saying to the intimate friends around him, "but I do not fear to die. Acquiescence under circumstances is a duty we are permitted to control." He declared, that could he but leave his family unembarrassed, and see the child of his old age, the university, fairly flourishing, he was ready to depart—*nunc dimittis Domine*, the beautiful ejaculation of the Hebrew prophet, was his favourite quotation.—May God and his country grant the fulfilment of his dying wishes. On the second of July, the complaint with which he was afflicted, left him; but his physician expressed his fears that his strength might not prove sufficient to restore him from the debility to which it had reduced him; conscious himself that he could not recover, and free from all bodily and apparently from all mental pain, he calmly gave directions

relative to his coffin and his interment, which he requested might be at Monticello without parade or pomp; he then called his family around him, and conversed separately with each of them; to his beloved daughter, Mrs. Randolph, he presented a small morocco case, which he requested her not to open until after his death—when the sad limitation had expired, it was found to contain an elegant and affectionate strain of poetry, on the virtues of her from whom he was thus torn away. On Monday, the following day, he enquired of those around him with much solicitude, what was the day of the month; they told him it was the third of July; he then eagerly expressed his desire that he might be permitted to live yet a little while, to breathe the air of the fiftieth anniversary. The wish was granted—the Almighty hand sustained him up to the very moment when his wish was complete; and then bore him to that world, where the pure in heart meet their God.

Those who are now alive, will never forget the deep sensation which the intelligence of this event produced, in every part of the United States. The public honours every where lavished, were not, in this case, the mere mockery of wo; but they found a correspondent feeling in the heart of every citizen. It scarcely required the indulgence of superstition or enthusiasm to see, in the extraordinary coincidence which marked the last hours of Mr. Jefferson, the directing hand of heaven; and in this lesson America had again reason to bless that Almighty power, which had so often seemed in days of adversity, specially to guide her through apparently unconquerable perils, and in days of prosperity to shower down upon her people, in the yet short period of their existence, what other nations have been unable to attain to in the long lapse of time.



In pursuing the ordinary duties of a biographer ; the personal and political character of Mr. Jefferson should now claim our notice ; yet it is with conscious inability, that we undertake the task. The memory of his public services, his many virtues, and his excellent and amiable life, are so fresh in our recollections, that to speak of him as we feel, may bear the appearance of panegyric rather than the dispassionate judgment of biography. The record of his actions, however, is a test to which all may appeal ; and if in any thing our opinions should be deemed erroneous, to that record let the appeal be made—as they are the surest, so are they the noblest monument he has left.

Mr. Jefferson expired at Monticello, at ten minutes before one o'clock on the fourth of July, 1826 ; within the same hour at which fifty years before, the declaration of independence had been promulgated. At this time he had reached the age of eighty-three years, two months, and twenty-one days. In person he was six feet two inches high, erect and well formed, though thin ; his eyes were light, and full of intelligence ; his hair very abundant, and originally of a yellowish red, though in his latter years, silvered with age. His complexion was fair and his countenance remarkably expressive ; his forehead broad, the nose not larger than the common size, and the whole face square and expressive of deep thinking. In his conversation he was cheerful and enthusiastic ; and his language was remarkable for its vivacity and correctness. His manners were extremely simple and unaffected, mingled however with much native, but unobtrusive dignity.

In his disposition, Mr. Jefferson was full of liberality and benevolence : of this the neighbourhood of Monticello affords innumerable monuments, and on his own estate, such was

the condition of his slaves, that in their comforts his own interests were too often entirely forgotten. Among his neighbours he was esteemed and beloved in an uncommon degree, and it is almost incredible with what respect his sentiments and opinions were regarded; a stranger traveling in the neighbourhood of Charlottesville, hears even yet constant allusions to his habits and actions, and his name is scarcely mentioned without that expression of veneration, which is the reward of private worth, even more than of public service. He possessed uncommon fortitude and strength of mind, with great firmness and personal courage; in forming his opinions he was slow and considerate, but when once formed, he relinquished them with great reluctance; his equanimity and command of temper were such, that his oldest friends have remarked that they never saw him give way to his passions; by his domestics he was regarded with all the warmth of filial affection. His attachment to his friends was warm and unvarying; his hospitality was far beyond his means, and left him, as we have seen, in his old age the victim of unexpected poverty.

The domestic habits of Mr. Jefferson were quite simple. His application was constant and excessive. He rose very early, and after his retirement from public life, devoted the morning to reading and to his correspondence, which was varied and extensive to a degree, that in his latter years became exceedingly troublesome. He then rode for an hour or two, an exercise to which he felt all the characteristic attachment of a Virginian, and which he continued until a very short period before his death; the horse he used was young, and not remarkably gentle, nor could he be prevailed on to allow the attendance of servants, even to the last. After dinner he returned to his studies with fresh ardour, and then

devoting his evening to his family, retired to bed at a very early hour.

The studies of Mr. Jefferson were extended to almost every branch of literature and science. He was the father of some, and the patron of many of the institutions of his country for their promotion. He was said to be a profound mathematician, and was in the habit of obtaining from France, up to the day of his death, the most abstruse treatises on that branch of science. His acquaintance with most of the modern languages was minutely accurate ; he was a profound Greek scholar, having devoted himself during his residence in Europe to an extensive and thorough study of that language ; and he is said to have cultivated a knowledge of those dialects of northern Europe, growing out of the Gothic, which are so closely connected with our own language, laws, customs, and history.

So much has been necessarily said, in recording the occurrences of Mr. Jefferson's life, that a summary of his general character is reduced within very narrow limits, and may be comprised in three periods ; the first from his early youth to the close of the revolutionary war ; the second from that time until his retirement from public service ; and the third his private life to its close.

In the first of these, we view him entering into life with that union of legal and political knowledge, and that mingled character of professional and agricultural pursuit, which long distinguished the gentlemen of a state, that has furnished a large proportion of our most eminent citizens. The troubles of his country soon commencing, he embarked in them with all the energy of youth, and rising with their increase, we find him throughout their course a firm and

fearless partisan, always foremost among those who led the van in the march of freedom, maturing his political principles by constant application, always decided in his conduct, and ready, as the times required, to devote himself to the more silent duties of legislation, or the more arduous occupations of executive trusts.

The second period of his life abounded in political circumstances, upon which the best and wisest of his countrymen have entertained very different sentiments; indeed it was scarcely possible, that in a universal change of almost the whole fabric of society, their opinions should not greatly vary. Those of Mr. Jefferson, as is well known, always leaned to the side of freedom, and whether they are viewed with favour or disapprobation, he must be taken as the great leader and author of the more popular form of our administration, as well as of that system which, by shutting out rather than increasing our connexion with foreign countries, leads to self dependence of our own. The great result of his measures, founded as they undoubtedly were on the excellent basis which had been laid before him, and generally followed up by his successors, has been the firm establishment of every great feature of our constitution, as it seems to have been originally designed, united with an administration of it, decidedly popular in its character, and of great simplicity, and at the same time a reduction of party spirit within limits perhaps as narrow as are possible or useful, and the increase to an amazing extent of the internal energy and resources of the nation.

The last period of Mr. Jefferson's life was that of rural and philosophic repose. Retiring from public scenes as the greatest of men in every age have done, his activity though abated was not lost, and he still performed the part of a

good and great citizen, watching over his country's actions and attempering them by his advice. His early disposition to letters, continued through his busiest, and was the resource of his last years; but his letters and philosophy were of the school of Franklin, less formed to investigate the depths of antiquity, or dazzle by their display, than to come home to the interests of his age and country, and direct mankind in the road of practical utility. Of the same character was his style, plain, useful, and energetic, adopting terms sometimes not before in use, where he thought them adapted to his purpose, and abounding sufficiently with manly and sublime touches where, as in several of his public papers, such were called for by his subject.

Like Franklin, Mr. Jefferson felt the gradual decay of age, affecting his body rather by insensible degrees, than by any settled infirmity, and his mind not at all. He became hoary, venerable, and bent with years, rather than broken by them; and his death was at last so happy in all its circumstances, that he seemed to have passed from this to another world, with the composure which religion and philosophy must equally desire.

END OF VOLUME IV

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